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THE WORKS OF LEWIS MORRIS

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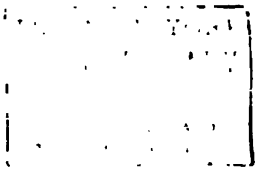

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OF

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SONGS OF TWO WORLDS.

FIRST SERIES (1872).

SOUL-MUSIC.

My soul is as a bird
Singing in fair weather,
Deep in shady woodlands through the evening's dewy calm;
Every glossy feather
On her full throat stirred,
As she pours out, rapt, unconscious, all the sweetness of her psalm;
Mounting high, and higher, higher,
Soaring now, now falling, dying;
Now through silvery pauses sighing;
Throbbing now with joyous strife,
And rushing tides of love and life,
Till some ray of heavenly fire
Shot obliquely through the shade,
Pierces her; and lo! the strain
Of the music she has made
Fills her with a sudden pain.

Then she forgets to sing
Her former songs of gladness;
Sitting mute in silence sweeter than the old forgotten lays;
Till anon some note of sadness,
Long-drawn, languishing,
Faint at first, swells onward slowly to a subtler depth of praise,
As the low, wild, minor, broken
By the ghosts of gayer fancies,
Like a rippling stream advances,
Till the full tide grown too deep,
Whispers first, then falls asleep.
Then, as souls with no word spoken
Grow together, she, mute and still,
Thrills through with a secret voice,
Which the farthest heaven can fill,
And constrains her to rejoice.

And the passer-by who hears,
Not the burst of pleasure,
Swelling upward, sweet, spontaneous, to the portals of the sky,
But a chastened measure,
Low and full of tears;
And anon the voiceless silence, when the last notes sink and die,
Deems some influence malign,
Checks the current of her song;
For that none are happy long.
Nay; but to the rapt soul come
Sounds that strike the singer dumb,
And the silence is Divine;
For when heaven gives back the strain,
All its joyous tones are o'er;
First the low sweet notes of pain,
Then, the singer sings no more.

LOVE'S MIRROR.

I SEE myself reflected in thine eyes,
The dainty mirrors set in golden flame
Of eyelash, quiver with a sweet surprise,
And most ingenuous shame.

Like Eve, who hid her from the dread command
Deep in the dewy blooms of paradise;
So thy shy soul, love calling, fears to stand
Discovered at thine eyes.

Or, like a tender little fawn, which lies
Asleep amid the fern, and waking, hears
Some careless footstep drawing near, and flies,
Yet knows not what she fears:

So shrinks thy soul; but, dearest, shrink not so;
Look thou into mine eyes as I in thine:
So our reflected souls shall meet and grow,
And each with each combine

In something nobler; as when one has laid
Opposite mirrors on a cottage wall;
And lo! the never-ending colonnade,
The vast palatial hall.

So our twin souls, by one sweet suicide,
Shall fade into an essence more sublime;
Living through death, and dying glorified,
Beyond the touch of time.

ON A YOUNG POET.

HERE lay him down in peace to take his rest,
Who tired of singing ere the day was done.
A little time, a little, beneath the sun,
He tarried and gave forth his artless song;
The bird that sings with the dawn, sings not for long,
Only when dew is on the grass his breast
Quivers, but his voice is silent long ere noon.
So sang he once, but might not long sustain
The high pure note of youth, for soon, too soon!
He ceased to know the sweet creative pain
Made still one voice, amid the clamorous strife,
And proved no more the joys or pains of life.

And better so than that his voice should fail,
And sink to earth, and lose its heavenlier tone;
Perchance, if he had stayed, the sad world's moan,
The long low discord of incessant wrong,
Had marred the perfect cadence of his song,
And made a grosser music to prevail.
But now it falls as pure upon the ear,
As sings the brown bird to the star of eve,
Or child's voice in grey minster quiring clear.

Rather then, give we thanks for him than grieve.
Thoughts of pure joys which but in memory live,
More joy than lower present joys can give.

For him, deep rest or high spontaneous strains;
For us, fierce strife and low laborious song;
For him, truth's face shining out clear and strong;
For us, half lights, thick clouds, and darkling days.
No longer walks his soul in mortal ways,
Nor thinks our thoughts, nor feels our joys or pains
Nor doubts our doubts, nor any more pursues,
Knowing all things, the far-off searchless cause;
Nor thrills with art, or nature's fairest hues,
Gazing on absolute beauty's inmost laws;
Or lies for ever sunk in dreamless sleep,
Nor recks of us;—and therefore 'tis we weep.

But surely if he sleep, some fair faint dream,
Some still small whisper from his ancient home,
Not joy, nor pain, but mixt of each shall come;
Or if he wake, the thought of earthly days
Shall add a tender sweetness to his praise;
Tempering the unbroken joyance of his theme.
And by-and-by the time shall come when we,
Laden with all our lives, once more shall meet,
Like friends, who after infinite wastes of sea,
Look in each other's eyes; and lo! the sweet
Sad fount of memory to its depths is stirred,
And the past lives again, without a word.

Mourn not for him! perchance he lends his voice
To swell the fulness of the eternal psalm;
Or haply, wrapt in nature's holy calm,
Safe hid within the fruitful womb of earth,
He ripens slowly to a higher birth.
Mourn not for him! but let your souls rejoice.
We know not what we shall be, but are sure
The spark once kindled by the eternal breath,
Goes not out quite, but somewhere doth endure
In that strange life we blindly christen death.
Somewhere he is, though where we cannot tell;
But wheresoe'er God hides him, it is well.

TO THE SETTING SUN.

STAY, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away
For now it is that life revives again,

As the red tyrant sinks beneath the hill;
And now soft dews refresh the arid plain;
And now the fair bird's voice begins to thrill;
With hidden dolours making sweet her strain
And wakes the woods that all day were so still.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away;
For now the rose and all fair flowers that blow
Give out sweet odours to the perfumed air,
And the white palace marbles blush and glow,
And the low, ivy-hidden cot shows fair.
Why are time's feet so swift, and ours so slow?
Haste, laggard! night will fall ere you are there.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away;
Soon the pale full-faced moon will slowly climb
Up the steep sky and quench the star of love.
Moonlight is fair, but fairer far the time
When through the leaves the dying shafts above
Slope, and the minster sounds its curfew chime,
And the long shadows lengthen through the grove.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away;
For, hark! the chime throbs from the darkling tower;
Soon for the last time shall my love be here:
Fair day, renew thy rays for one brief hour.
O sweet day, tarry for us, tarry near;
To-morrow, love and time will lose their power,
And sighs be mine, and the unbidden tear.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away.
But, ah! thou may'st not; in the far-off west
Impatient lovers weary till you rise;
Or may be caring naught thou traversest
The plains betwixt thee and thy final skies:
Go, then; though darkness come, we shall be blest,
Keeping sweet daylight, in each other's eyes.

THE TREASURE OF HOPE.

O FAIR bird, singing in the woods,
To the rising and the setting sun,
Does ever any throb of pain
Thrill through thee ere thy song be done:
Because the summer fleets so fast;
Because the autumn fades so soon;
Because the deadly winter treads
So closely on the steps of June?

O sweet maid, opening like a rose
In love's mysterious, honeyed air,
Dost think sometimes the day will come
When thou shalt be no longer fair:

When love will leave thee and pass on
To younger and to brighter eyes;
And thou shalt live unloved, alone,
A dull life, only dowered with sighs?

O brave youth, panting for the fight,
To conquer wrong and win thee fame,
Dost see thyself grown old and spent,
And thine a still unhonoured name:
When all thy hopes have come to naught,
And all thy fair schemes droop and pine
And wrong still lifts her hydra heads
To fall to younger arms than thine?

Nay; song and love and lofty aims
May never be where faith is not;
Strong souls within the present live;
The future veiled,—the past forgot:
Grasping what is, with hands of steel,
They bend what shall be, to their will;
And blind alike to doubt and dread,
The End, for which they are, fulfil.

THE LEGEND OF FAITH.

THEY say the Lord of time and all the worlds,
Came to us once, a feeble, new-born child;
All-wise, yet dumb; weak, though omnipotent:
Surely a heaven-sent vision, for it tells
How innocence is godlike. And the Lord
Renews, through childhood, to our world-dimmed eyes,
The half forgotten splendours of the skies.

And because motherhood is sacreder
And purer far than any fatherhood,
White flowers are fairer than red fruit, and sense
Brings some retributive pain; the virgin queen
Sits 'mid the stars, and cloistered courts are filled
With vain regrets, dead lives, and secret sighs,
And the long pain of weary litanies.

And because we, who stand upon the shore,
See the cold wave sweep up and take with it
White spotless souls, and others lightly soiled,
Yet with no stain God deems indelible:
These are His saints mighty to intercede,
Those in some dim far country tarry, and there
Are purified; and both are reached by prayer.

And as the faith once given changes not,
But we are weak as water; yet is life
A process, and where growth is not is death.
God gave His priests infallible power to tell
The true faith as it is, and how it grew:
And lo! the monstrous cycle shows complete,
And the Church brings the nations to her feet.

BY THE SEA.

A LITTLE country churchyard,
On the verge of a cliff by the sea;
Ah! the thoughts of the long years past and gone
That the vision brings back to me.

For two ways led from the village,—
One, by the rippled sands,
With their pink shells fresh from the ebbing wave
For childish little hands.

And one 'mid the heath, and the threat'ning
Loud bees with the yellow thighs,
And, twinkling out of the golden furze,
The marvellous butterflies.

And the boom of the waves on the shingle,
And the hymn of the lark to the sun;
Made Sabbath sounds of their own, ere the chime
Of the church-going bell had begun.

I remember the churchyard studded
With peasants who loitered and read
The sad little legends, half effaced,
On the moss-grown tombs of the dead.

And the gay graves of little children,
Fashioned like tiny cots;
With their rosemary and southernwood,
And blue-eyed forget-me-nots.

Till the bell by degrees grew impatient,
Then ceased as the parsonage door
Opened wide for the surpliced vicar,
And we loitered and talked no more.

I remember the cool, dim chancel,
And the drowsy hum of the prayers;
And the rude psalms vollied from seafaring throats
As if to take heaven unawares.

Till, when sermon-time came, by permission
We stole out among the graves,
And saw the great ocean a-blaze in the sun,
And heard the deep roar of the waves.

And clung very close together,
As we spelt out with wonder and tears,
How a boy lay beneath who was drowned long ago,
And was "Aged eleven years."

And heard, with a new-born terror,
The first surge of the infinite Sea,
Whose hither-shore is the shore of Death,
And whose further, the Life to be.

"Did the sea swallow up little children?
Could God see the wickedness done?
Nor spare one swift-winged seraph to save
From the thousands around His throne?"

"Was he still scarce older than we were,
Still only a boy of eleven?
Were child-angels children always
In the beautiful courts of heaven?"

Ah me! of those childish dreamers,
One has solved the dark riddle since then:
And knows the dread secret which none may know
Who walk in the ways of men.

The other has seen the splendour
And mystery fading away;
Too wise or too dull to take thought or care
For aught but the needs of the day.

VOICES.

Oh ! sometimes when the solemn organ rolls
Its stream of sound down gray historic aisles ;
Or the full, high-pitched struggling symphony
Pursues the fleeting melody in vain :
Like a fawn through shadowy groves, or heroine
Voiced like a lark, pours out in burning song
Her love or grief ; or when, to the rising stars
Linked village maidens chant the hymn of eve ;
Or Sabbath concourse, flushed and dewy-eyed
Booms its full bass ; or before tasks begun,
Fresh childish voices sanctify the morn :
My eyes grow full, my heart forgets to beat.
What is this mystic yearning fills my being ?

Hark ! the low music wakes, and soft and slow
Wanders at will through flowery fields of sound ;
Climbs gentle hills, and sinks in sunny vales,
And stoops to cull sweet way-side blooms, and weaves
A dainty garland ; then, grown tired, casts down
With careless hand the fragrant coronal,
And child-like sings itself to sleep.
Anon
The loud strain rises like a strong knight armed,
Battling with wrong ; or passionate seer of God
Scathing with tongue of fire the hollow shows,
The vain deceits of men ; or law-giver,
Parting in thunder from the burning hill
With face aflame ; or with fierce rush of wings
And blazing brand, upon the crest of Sin,
The swift archangel swooping ; or the roll
Which follows on the lightning ;—all are there
In that great hurry of sound.
And then the voice
Grows thinner like a lark's, and soars and soars,
And mounts in circles, higher, higher, higher,
Up to heaven's gate, and lo ! the unearthly song
Thrills some fine inner chord, and the swift soul,
Eager and fluttering like a prisoned bird,
Breaks from its cage, and soars aloft to join
The enfranchised sound, and for a moment seems
To touch on some dim border-land of being,
Full of high thought and glorious enterprise
And vague creative fancies, till at length
Waxed grosser than the thin ethereal air,
It sinks to earth again.
And then a strain
Sober as is the tender voice of home,
Unbroken like a gracious life, and lo

Young children sit around me, and the love
I never knew is mine, and so my eyes
Grow full, and all my being is thrilled with tears.

What is this strange new life, this finer sense,
This passionate exaltation, which doth force
Like the weird Indian juggler, instantly
My soul from seed to flower, from flower to fruit,
Which lifts me out of self, and bids me tread
Without a word, on dim aërial peaks,
Impossible else, and rise to glorious thoughts,
High hopes, and inarticulate fantasies
Denied to soberer hours? No spoken thought
Of bard or seer can mount so far, or lift
The soul to such transcendent heights, or work
So strong a spell of love, or roll along
Such passionate troubled depths. No painter's hand
Can limn so clear, the luminous air serene
Of Paradise, the halcyon deep, the calm
Of the eternal snows, the eddy and whirl
Of mortal fight, the furious flood let loose
From interlacing hills, the storm which glooms
Over the shoreless sea. Our speech too oft
Is bound and fettered by such narrow laws,
That words which to one nation pierce the heart,
To another are but senseless sounds, or weak
And powerless to stir the soul; but this
Speaks with a common tongue, uses a speech
Which all may understand, or if it bear
Some seeds of difference in it, only such
As separates gracious sisters, like in form,
But one by gayer fancies touched, and one
Rapt by sweet graver thoughts alone, and both
Mighty to reach the changing moods of the soul,
Or grave or gay, and though sometimes they be
Mated with unintelligible words,
Or feeble and unworthy, yet can lend
A charm to gild the worthless utterance,
And wing the sordid chrysalis to float
Amid the shining stars.
Oh strange sweet power,
Ineffable, oh gracious influence,
I know not whence thou art, but this I know.
Thou holdest in thy hand the silver key
That can unlock the sacred fount of tears,
Which falling make life green; the hidden spring
Of purer fancies and high sympathies:
No mirth is thine, thou art too high for mirth,—
Like Him who wept but smiled not: mirth is born
On the low plains of thoughts best reached by words.
But those who scale the untrodden mountain peak,

Or sway upon the trembling spire, are far
From laughter; so thy gracious power divine,
Not sad but solemn, stirs the well of tears,
But not mirth's shallow spring: tears are divine,
But mirth is of the earth, a creature born
Of careless youth and joyance; satisfied
With that which is; parched by no nobler thirst
For that which might be; pained by no regret
For that which was, but is not: but for thee.
Oh, fair mysterious power, the whole great scheme
Lies open like a book; and if the charm
Of its high beauty makes thee sometimes gay,
Yet 'tis an awful joy, so mixed with thought,
That even Mirth grows grave, and evermore
The myriad possibilities unfulfilled,
The problem of Creation, the immense
Impenetrable depths of thought, the vague
Perplexities of being, touch thy lips
And keep thee solemn always.
Oh, fair voice,
Oh virginal, sweet interpreter, reveal
Our inner selves to us, lay bare the springs,
The hidden depths of life, the high desires
Which lurk there unsuspected, the remorse
Which never woke before; unclothe the soul
Of this its shroud of sense, and let it mount,
On the harmonious beat of thy light wings,
Up to those heights where life is so attuned,
So pure and self-concordant; filled so deep
With such pervading beauty that no voice
Mars the unheard ineffable harmony,
And o'er white plain and breathless summit reigns
A silence sweeter than the sweetest sound.

WEAKNESS MADE STRONG.

If I were poor and weak,
  Bankrupt of hope, and desolate of love;
Without a tongue to speak
  The strange dumb thoughts of thee which through me move;
Then would I freely venture, sweet,
To cast my soul down at thy feet.

Or were I proud and great;
  Were all men envious, and all women kind,
And yet my high estate
  Showed poor beside the riches of my mind:
Then would I boldly stoop, to rise
Up to the height of thy dear eyes.

But being not weak nor strong,
  Cast in the common mould of coarser clay;
Sure 'twere to do thee wrong
  To set my humble homage in thy way,

And cloud thy sunny morn, which I would fain
Keep clear and fair, with my poor private pain.

Only since love and I are so ingrown,
That for my weakness is my love so strong;
And scarce I know what love's is, what mine own,
Nor whether love or I inspire my song:
Take thou my weakness to thy strength, and give
Strength to my weakness, sweet, and bid me live.

WAKING.

OPEN, my soul, thy stately portals wide;
Open full wide, and let thy King come in!
How shall he come? In royal pomp and pride,
Ushered by braying trumpets' clamorous din;
Clothed round with purple; crowned with burning gold:
A kingly presence, glorious to behold?

Nay; for he is no mortal king, to come
With trumpet peals and crowds and garish state;
But silent to the soul he makes his home,
He enters by some lowly postern gate!
And she, within her chambers far withdrawn,
Cries like the wakeful bird that greets the dawn.

It may be she is seated 'mid the throng,
Crowned with the flowers of life and youth and health;
Thrilled through by breathing art or passionate song,
Or faint with hot pursuit of fame or wealth;
Rapt by the glorious thoughts of saints or seers,
Or radiant with the blessèd dew of tears.

And then the wicket swings without a sound,
And lo! a ghostly presence, pale and gray,—
Sad eyes which dwell not on the things around,
But gaze for ever on the Far-off Day!
Then a low voice, whispering, "Thy King is come;
Rejoice, be glad, for here he makes his home."

Then rises she and hastens to the gate,—
Her royal gate, and there she casts her down:
Prone at his feet bewails her low estate,
Yet prays him he will enter to his own!
Spurns from her all her robes of pride, and stands,
Knowing her shame, to do her Lord's commands,

Whom with a touch he fashions for her part;
Dowers with the precious gifts of bard or sage;

The hand to fix the dreams of deathless art,
The imperial will, the patriot's noble rage:
Or fills with such fine affluence of love,
That she grows holy as the saints above.

Then open, O my soul! thy portals wide,
Open, and let thy Lord and Ruler come;
Open, if haply he may here abide,
And make within thee his eternal home.
Open thy gates, thy halls, thine inmost shrine,
Till all are flooded with the Light divine.

AT HAVRE DE GRACE.

Above the busy Norman town,
The high precipitous sea-cliffs rise,
And from their summit looking down
The twin-lights shine with lustrous eyes;
Far out upon the fields of foam,
The first to greet the wanderer home.

Man here has known at last to tame
Nature's wild forces to his will;
Those are the lightning's fires which flame,
From yon high towers with ray so still:
And knowledge, piercing through the night
Of time, has summoned forth the light.

And there, hard by the lighthouse door,
The earthly set by the divine;
At a stone's cast, or scarcely more,
Rises a little pagan shrine,
Where the rough seamen come to pray,
And wives, for dear ones far away.

There, on a starry orb, there stands
A heavenly goddess, proud and fair;
No infant holds she in her hands
Which must a queenly sceptre bear.
Nay; wonder not, for this is she
Who rules the fury of the sea.

Star of the sea, they call her, yet
Liker to Heré doth she show,
Than Aphroditć, rising wet
From the white waves, with limbs aglow.
Calmer she seems, more pure and sweet,
To the poor kneelers at her feet.

Before her still the vestal fires
Burn unextinguished day and night;
And the sweet frankincense expires
And fair flowers blow, and gems are bright:
For a great power in heaven is she,
This star and goddess of the sea.

Around the temple, everywhere,
Rude tablets hung, attest her might;
Here the fierce surge she smooths, and there
Darts downward on a bar of light;
To quench the blazing ship, or save
The shipwrecked from the hungry wave.

And sea-gifts round the shrine are laid,
Poor offerings, costlier far than gold:
Such as the earlier heathen made,
To the twin Deities of old,—
Toy ships, shells, coral, glittering spar,
Brought here by grateful hands from far.

A very present help indeed,
  This goddess is to whom they bow;
We seek Thy face with hearts that bleed,
  And straining eyes, dread Lord! but Thou
Hidest Thyself so far away,
Our thoughts scarce reach Thee as we pray.

But is this she, whom the still voice
  Of angels greeted in the night;
Bidding the poor maid's heart rejoice,
  With visions hid from wiser sight:
This heathen nymph, this tinselled queen,
First of all mothers who have been?

Gross hearts and purblind eyes, to make
  An idol of a soul so sweet!
Could you no meaner essence take,
  No brazen image with clay feet;
No saint from out the crowd of lies,
False signs and shameful prodigies?

For this one bears too great a name,
  Above all other women blest;
The blessèd mother,—all her fame
  Is His who nestled to her breast:
They do but dull her glory down,
These childless arms, this earthly crown.

Poor peasant mother! scarce a word
  Thou spak'st, the long-drawn years retain;
Only thy womb once bare the Lord;
  Only thou knew'st the joy, the pain,
The high hope seeming quenched in blood
That marked thy awful motherhood.

No trace of all thy life remains,
  From His first childhood to the cross;
A life of little joys and pains,
  Of humble gain and trivial loss:
Contented if the ewes should bear
Twin lambs, or wheat were full in ear.

Or if sometimes the memory
  Of that dread message of the night
Troubled thy soul, there came to thee
  New precious duties; till the flight,
The desert sands, the kneeling kings,
Showed but as half-forgotten things.

Or sometimes, may be, pondering deep
  On miracles of word and deed,
Vague doubts across thy soul would creep,
  Still faithful to the older creed:
Could this thy son indeed be He,
This child who prattled at thy knee?

And of thy after-life, thy age,
  Thy death, no record; not a line
On all the fair historic page
  To mark the life these hold divine:
Only some vague tradition, faint
As the sick story of a saint.

But thou no longer art to-day
  The sweet maid-mother, fair and pure;
Vast time-worn reverend temples gray,
  Throne thee in majesty obscure;
And long aisles stretch in minsters high,
'Twixt thee, fair peasant, and the sky.

They seek to honour thee, who art
  Beyond all else a mother indeed;

With hateful vows that blight the heart,
With childless lives, and souls that bleed:
As if their dull hymns' barren strain
Could fill a mother with aught but pain!

To the gross earth they bind thee down
With coils of fable, chain on chain;
From plague or war to save the town;
To give, or hold; the sun, or rain;
To whirl through air a favourite shrine,—
These are thy functions, and divine.

And see, in long procession rise
The fair Madonnas of all time;
They gaze from sweet maternal eyes,
The dreams of every Christian clime:
Brown girls and icy queens, the breast
And childish lips proclaim them blest.

Till as the gradual legend grew,
Born without stain, and scorning death;
Heavenward thou soarest through the blue,
While saints and seers aspire beneath:
And fancy-nurtured cam'st to be
Queen over sky and earth and sea.

Oh, sin! oh, shame! oh, folly! Rise;
Poor heathen, think to what you bow;
Consider, beyond God's equal skies,
What pains that faithful soul must know,—
She a poor peasant on the throne
Raised for the Lord of Life, alone.

O sweet! O heart of hearts! O pure
Above all purest maids of earth!
O simple child, who didst endure
The burden of that awful birth:
Heart, that the keenest sword didst know,
Soul bowed by alien loads of woe!

Sweet soul! have pity; intercede,
Oh mother of mothers, pure and meek;
They know no evil,—rise and plead
For these poor wandering souls and weak;
Tear off those pagan rags, and lead
Their worship where 'tis due indeed.

For wheresoever there is home,
And mothers yearn with sacred love,
There, since from Heaven itself they come,
Are symbols of the life above:
Again the sweet maid-mother mild,
Again the fair Eternal child.

WHEN I AM DEAD.

When I am dead and turned to dust,
Let men say what they will, I care not aught;
Let them say I was careless, indolent,
Wasted the precious hours in dreaming thought,
Did not the good I might have done, but spent
My soul upon myself,—sometimes let rise
Thick mists of earth betwixt me and the skies:
What must be must.

But not that I betrayed a trust;
Broke some girl's heart, and left her to her shame;

Sneered young souls out of faith; rose by deceit;
Lifted by credulous mobs to wealth and fame;
Waxed fat while good men waned, by lie and cheat;
Cringed to the strong; oppressed the poor and weak:
When men say this, may some find voice to speak,
Though I am dust.

LOVE'S SUICIDE.

ALAS for me for that my love is dead!
Buried deep down, and may not rise again;
Self-murdered, vanished, gone beyond recall,
And this is all my pain.

'Tis not that she I loved is gone from me,
She lives and grows more lovely day by day;
Not Death could kill my love, but though she lives,
My love has died away.

Nor was it that a form or face more fair
Forswore my troth, for so my love had proved
Eye-deep alone, not rooted in the soul;
And 'twas not thus I loved.

Nor that by too long dalliance with delight
And recompense of love, my love had grown
Surfeit with sweets, like some tired bee that flags
'Mid roses over-blown.

None of these slew my love, but some cold wind,
Some chill of doubt, some shadowy dissidence,
Born out of too great concord, did o'ercloud
Love's subtle inner sense.

So one sweet changeless chord, too long sustained,
Falls at its close into a lower tone:
So the swift train, sped on the long, straight way,
Sways, and is overthrown.

For difference is the soul of life and love,
And not the barren oneness weak souls prize:
Rest springs from strife, and dissonant chords beget
Divinest harmonies.

THE RIVER OF LIFE.

BRIGHT with unnumbered laughters, and swollen by a thousand tears,
Rushes along, through upland and lowland, the river of life;
Sometimes foaming and broken, and sometimes silent and slumbrous,
Sometimes through rocky glens, and sometimes through flowery plains.
Sometimes the mountains draw near, and the black depths swirl at their bases,
Sometimes the limitless meads fade on the verge of the sky,
Sometimes the forests stand round, and the great trees cast terrible shadows,
Sometimes the golden wheat waves, and girls fill their pitchers and sing.

Always the same strange flow, through changes and chances unchanging,
Always—in youth and in age, in calm and in tempest the same—
Whether it sparkle transparent and give back the blue like a mirror,
Or sweep on turbid with flood, and black with the garbage of towns—
Whether the silvery scale of the minnow flash on the pebbles,
Or whether the poisonous ooze cling for a shroud round the dead—
Whether it struggle through shoals of white blooms and feathery grasses,
Or bear on its bosom the hulls of ocean-tost navies—the same.

Flow on, O mystical river, flow on through desert and city;
Broken or smooth, flow onward into the Infinite sea.
Who knows what urges thee on, what dark laws and cosmical forces
Stain thee or keep thee pure, and bring thee at last to thy goal?
What is the cause of thy rest or unrest, of thy foulness or pureness?
What is the secret of life, or the painful riddle of death?
Why is it better to be than to cease, to flow on than to stagnate?
Why is the river-stream sweet, while the sea is as bitter as gall?

Surely we know not at all, but the cycle of Being is eternal,
Life is eternal as death, tears are eternal as joy.
As the stream flowed, it will flow; though 'tis sweet, yet the sea will be bitter:
Foul it with filth, yet the deltas grow green and the ocean is clear.
Always the sun and the winds will strike its broad surface and gather
Some purer drops from its depths, to float in the clouds of the sky;—
Soon these shall fall once again, and replenish the full-flowing river.
Roll round then, O mystical cycle! flow onward, ineffable stream!

A HEATHEN HYMN.

O LORD, the Giver of my days,
My heart is ready, my heart is ready;
I dare not hold my peace, nor pause,
For I am fain to sing Thy praise.

I praise Thee not, with impious pride,
For that Thy partial hand has given
Bounties of wealth or form or brain,
Good gifts to other men denied.

Nor weary Thee with blind request,
For fancied goods Thy hand withholds;
I know not what to fear or hope,
Nor aught but that Thy will is best.

Not whence I come, nor whither I go,
Nor wherefore I am here, I know;
Nor if my life's tale ends on earth,
Or mounts to bliss, or sinks to woe.

Nor know I aught of Thee, O Lord;
Behind the veil Thy face is hidden:
We faint, and yet Thy face is hidden;
We cry,—Thou answerest not a word.

But this I know, O Lord, Thou art,
And by Thee I too live and am;
We stand together, face to face,
Thou the great whole, and I the part.

We stand together, soul to soul,
Alone amidst Thy waste of worlds;
Unchanged, though all creation fade,
And Thy swift suns forget to roll.

Wherefore, because my life is Thine,
Because, without Thee I were not;
Because, as doth the sea, the sun,
My nature gives back the Divine.

Because my being with ceaseless flow
Sets to Thee as the brook to the sea;
Turns to Thee, as the flower to the sun,
And seeks what it may never know.

Because, without me Thou hadst been
For ever, seated midst Thy suns;
Marking the soulless cycles turn,
Yet wert Thyself unknown, unseen.

I praise Thee, everlasting Lord,
In life and death, in heaven and hell:
What care I, since indeed Thou art,
And I the creature of Thy word.

Only if such a thing may be:
When all Thy infinite will is done,
Take back the soul Thy breath has given,
And let me lose myself in Thee.

IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

UNDER the picture gallery wall,
As a sea-leaf clings to a wave-worn rock,
Nor shrinks from the surging impetuous shock
Of the breakers which gather and whiten and fall—
A child's form crouches, nor seems to heed
The ceaseless eddy and whirl of men:
Men and women with hearts that bleed,
Men and women of wealth and fame,
High in honour, or sunk in shame,
Pass on like phantoms, and pass again.
And he lies there like a weed.

A child's form, said I; but looking again
It is only the form that is childish now,
For age has furrowed the low dull brow,
And marked the pale face with its lines of pain.
Yet but few years have fled, since I first passed by,
For a dwarf's life is short if you go by the sun,
And marked in worn features and lustreless eye
Some trace of youth's radiance, though faint and thin,
But now, oh, strange jest! there's a beard to his chin.
And he lies there, grown old ere his youth is done,
With his poor limbs bent awry.

What a passer-by sees, is a monstrous head,
With a look in the eyes as of those who gaze
On some far-off sight with a dumb amaze;
A face as pale as the sheeted dead,
A frail body propped on a padded crutch,
And lean long fingers, which flutter the keys
Of an old accordion, returning their touch
With some poor faint echoes of popular song,

Trivial at all times and obsolete long,
Psalm-tunes, and African melodies,
Not differing very much.

And there he sits nightly in heat and cold,
When the fountains fall soft on the stillness of June,
Or when the sharp East sings its own shrill tune,
Patiently playing and growing old.
The long year waxes and wanes, the great
Flash by in splendour from rout or ball,
Statesmen grown weary with long debate,
Hurry by homewards, and fling him alms;
Pitiful women, touched by the psalms,
Bringing back innocence, stoop by the wall
Where he lies at Dives' gate.

What are his thoughts of, stranded there?
While life ebbs and flows by, again and again,
Does the old sad Problem vex his poor brain?
"Why is the world so pleasant and fair,
Why, am I only who did no wrong
Crippled and bent out of human form?
Why are other men tall and strong?
Surely if all men were made to rejoice,
Seeing that we come without will or choice,
It were better to crawl for a day like a worm,
Than to lie like this so long!

"The blind shuffles by with a tap of his staff,
The tired tramp plods to the workhouse ward,—
But he carries his broad back as straight as a lord
And the blind man can hear his little ones laugh,
While I lie here like a weed on the sand,
With these crooked limbs, paining me night and day.
Is it true, what they tell of a far-off land,
In the sweet old faith which was preached for the poor,—
Where none shall be weary or pained any more,
Nor change shall enter nor any decay,
And the stricken down shall stand?"

And perhaps sometimes when the sky is clear,
And the stars show like lamps on the sweet summer night,
Some chance chord struck with a sudden delight,
Soars aloft with his soul, and brings Paradise near.
And then—for even nature is sometimes kind—
He lies stretched under palms with a harp of gold;
Or is whirled on by coursers as fleet as the wind;
And is no more crippled, nor weak nor bent;
No more painful nor impotent;
No more hungry, nor weary nor cold,—
But of perfect form and mind.

Or maybe his thoughts are of humbler cast,
For hunger and cold are real indeed;
And he looks for the hour when his toil shall be past,

And he with sufficient for next day's need:
Some humble indulgence of food or fire,
Some music-hall ditty, or marvellous book,
Or whatever it be such poor souls desire;
And with this little solace, for God would fain
Make even his measures of joy and pain,
He drones happily on in his quiet nook,
With hands that never tire.

Well, these random guesses must go for nought
Seeing it is wiser and easier far
To weigh to an atom the faintest star,
Than to sound the dim depths of a brother's thought.
But whenever I hear those poor snatches of song,
And see him lie maimed in body and soul,
While I am straight and healthy and strong,
I seem to redden with a secret shame,
That we should so differ who should be the same,
Till I hear their insolent chariot wheels roll
The millionaires along.

WATCH.

Oh, hark! the languid air is still,
The fields and woods seem hushed and dumb.
But listen, and you shall hear a thrill,
An inner voice of silence come,
Stray notes of birds, the hum of bees,
The brook's light gossip on its way,
Voices of children heard at play,
Leaves whispering of a coming breeze.

Oh, look! the sea is fallen asleep,
The sail hangs idle evermore;
Yet refluent from the outer deep,
The low wave sobs upon the shore.
Silent the dark cave ebbs and fills,
Silent the broad weeds wave and sway;
Yet yonder fairy fringe of spray
Is born of surges vast as hills.

Oh, see! the sky is deadly dark,
There shines not moon nor any star;
But gaze awhile, and you shall mark
Some gleam of glory from afar:
Some half-hid planet's vagrant ray;
Some lightning flash which wakes the world;
Night's pirate banner slowly furled;
And, eastward, some faint flush of day.

DROWNED.

Only eighteen winters old!
Lay her with a tender hand
On the delicate, ribbed sea-sand:
Stiff and cold; ay, stiff and cold.

What she has been, who shall care?
Looking on her as she lies
With those stony, sightless eyes,
And the sea-weed in her hair.

Think, O mothers! how the deep
All the dreary night did rave;
Thundering foam and crested wave,
While your darlings lay asleep.

How she cleft the midnight air;
And the idiot surge beneath
Whirled her sea-ward to her death,
Angry that she was so fair.

Tossed her, beat her, till no more
Rage could do, through all the night;
Then with morning's ghastly light,
Flung her down upon the shore.

Mother! when brief years ago
You were happy in your child,
Smiling on her as she smiled,
Thought you she would perish so?

Man! who made her what she is;
What, if when you falsely swore
You would love her more and more,
You had seen her lie like this.

And, O Infinite Cause! didst Thou,
When Thou mad'st this hapless child,
Dowered with passions, fierce and wild,
See her lie as she lies now?

Filled with wild revolt and rage,
All I feel I may not speak;
Fate so strong, and we so weak,
Like rats in a cage,—like rats in a cage.

THE WANDERER.

I REARED my virgin Soul on dainty food,
I fed her with rich fruit and garnered gold
From gardens planted by the pious care
Of the wise dead of old.

The long procession of the fabulous Past,
Rolled by for me—the earliest dawn of time;
The seven great Days; the garden and the sword;
The first red stain of crime;

The fierce rude chiefs who smote, and burned, and slew,
And all for God; the pitiless tyrants grand,
Who piled to heaven the eternal monuments,
Unchanged amid the sand;

The fairy commonwealths, where Freedom first
Inspired the ready hand and glowing tongue
To a diviner art and sweeter song
Than men have feigned or sung;

The strong bold sway that held mankind in thrall,
Soldier and jurist marching side by side,
Till came the sure slow blight, when all the world
Grew sick, and swooned, and died;

Again the long dark night, when Learning dozed
Safe in her cloister, and the world without
Rang with fierce shouts of war and cries of pain,
Base triumph, baser rout;

Till rose a second dawn of light again,
Again the freemen stood in firm array
Behind the foss, and Pope and Kaiser came,
Wondered and turned away;

And then the broadening stream, till the sleek priest
Aspired to tread the path the Pagan trod,
And Rome fell once again, and the brave North
Rose from the church to God.

All these passed by for me, till the vast tide
Grew to a sea too wide for any shore;
Then doubt o'erspread me, and a cold disgust,
And I would look no more.

For something said, "The Past is dead and gone,
Let the dead bury their dead, why strive with Fate?
Why seek to feed the children on the husks
Their rude forefathers ate?"

"For even were the Past reflected back
As in a mirror, in the historic page,
For us its face is strange, seeing that the race
Betters from age to age."

"And if, hearing the tale we told ourselves,
We marvel how the monstrous fable grew;
How in these far-off years shall men discern
The fictive from the true?"

* * * *

Then turned I to the broad domain of Art,
To seek if haply Truth lay hidden there;
Well knowing that of old close links connect
The true things and the fair.

Fair forms I found, and rounded limbs divine,
The maiden's grace, the tender curves of youth,
The majesty of happy perfect years,
But only half the truth.

For there is more, I thought, in man, and higher,
Than animal graces cunningly combined;
Since oft within the unlovely frame is set
The shining, flawless mind.

So I grew weary of the pallid throng,
Deep-bosomed maids and stalwart heroes tall.
One type I saw, one earthy animal seal
Of comeliness in all!

But not the awful, mystical human soul—
The soul that grovels and aspires in turn—
The soul that struggles outwards into light
Through lips and eyes that burn.

So, from the soulless marbles, white and bare
And cold, too-perfect art, I turned and sought
The canvases, where Christian hands have left
The fruits of holy thought.

Passion I found, and love, and godlike pain,
The swift soul rapt by mingled hopes and fears,
Eyes lit with glorious light from the Unseen,
Or dim with sacred tears.

But everywhere around the living tree
I marked the tangled growths of fable twine,
And gross material images confuse
The earthly and divine.

I saw the Almighty Ruler of the worlds,
The one unfailing Source of Light and Love,
A sullen gray-beard set on rolling clouds,
Armed with the bolts of Jove.

The Eternal Son, a shapeless new-born child,
Supine upon His peasant-mother's knees,
Or else a ghastly victim, crushed and worn
By physical agonies.

The virgin mother—now a simple girl;
Or old and blurred with tears, and wan with sighs;
And now a goddess, oft-times giving back
The harlot-model's eyes.

Till faring on what spark of heaven was there,
Grew pale, then went out quite; and in its stead,
Dull copies of dull common life usurped
The empire of the dead.

Or if sometimes, rapt in a sweet suspense,
I knew a passionate yearning thrill my soul,
As down long aisles from lofty quires I heard
The solemn music roll;

Or if at last the long-drawn symphony,
After much weary wandering seemed to soar
To a finer air, and subtle measures born
On some diviner shore,

I thought how much of poor mechanical skill,
How little fire of heart, or force of brain,
Was theirs who first devised or now declared
That magical sweet strain;

And how the art was partial, not immense,
As Truth is, or as Beauty, but confined
To this our later Europe, not spread out,
Wide as the width of mind.

* * * *

So then from Art, and all its empty shows
And outward-seeming truth, I turned and sought
The secret springs of knowledge which lie hid
Deep in the wells of thought.

The hoary thinkers of the Past I knew;
Whose dim vast thoughts, to too great stature grown,
Flashed round as fitful lightning flashes round
The black vault of the Unknown.

Who, seeing that things are Many, and yet are One;
That all things suffer change, and yet remain—
That opposite flows from opposite, Life and Death,
Love, Hatred, Pleasure, Pain—

Raised high upon the mystical throne of life
Some dim abstraction, hopeful to unwind
The tangled maze of things, by one rude guess
Of an untutored mind.

The sweet Ideal Essences revealed,
To that high poet-thinker's eyes I saw;
The archetypes which underset the world
With one broad perfect Law.

The fair fantastic Commonwealth, too fair
For earth, wherein the wise alone bore rule—
So wise that oftentimes the sage himself
Shows duller than the fool;

And that white soul, clothed with a satyr's form,
Which shone beneath the laurels day by day,
And, fired with burning faith in God and Right,
Doubted men's doubts away;

And him who took all knowledge for his own,
And with the same swift logical sword laid bare
The depths of heart and mind, the mysteries
Of earth and sea and air;

And those on whom the visionary East
Worked in such sort, that knowledge grew to seem
An ecstasy, a sudden blaze, revealed
To crown the mystic's dream;

Till, once again, the old light faded out,
And left no trace of that fair day remain—
Only a barren method, binding down
Men's thoughts with such a chain

That knowledge sank self-slain, like some stout knight
Clogged by his harness; nor could wit devise
Aught but ignoble quibbles, subtly mixed
With dull theologies.

Not long I paused with these; but passed to him
Who, stripping, like a skilful wrestler, cast
From his strong arms the precious deadly web,
The vesture of the past;

And looked in Nature's eyes, and, foot to foot,
Strove with her daily, till the witch at length
Gave up, reluctant, to the questing mind
The secret of her strength.

And then the old fight, fought on modern fields,—
Whether we know by sense or inward sight—
Whether a law within, or use alone,
Mark out the bounds of right—

All these were mine; and then the ancient doubt,
Which scarce kept silence as this master taught

The undying soul, or that one subtly probed
The process of our thought,

And shuddered at the dreadful innocent talk
To the cicala's chirp beneath the trees—
Love poised on silver wings, love fallen and fouled
By black iniquities;

And laughed to scorn their quest of cosmic law,
Saw folly in the Mystic and the Schools,
And in the Newer Method gleams of truth
Obscured by childish rules;

Rose to a giant's strength, and always cried—
You shall not find the truth here, she is gone;
What glimpse men had, was ages since, and these
Go idly babbling on—

Jangles of opposite creeds, alike untrue,
Quaint puzzles, meaningless logomachies,
Efforts to pierce the infinite core of things
With purblind finite eyes.

Go, get you gone to Nature, she is kind
To reasonable worship; she alone
Thinks scorn, when humble seekers ask for bread,
To offer them a stone.

* * * *

And Nature drew me to her, and awhile
Enchained me. Day by day, things strange and new
Rose on me; day by day, I seemed to tread
Fresh footsteps of the true.

I laid life's house bare to its inmost room
With lens and scalpel, marked the simple cell
Which might one day be man or creeping worm,
For aught that sense could tell,—

Thrust life to its utmost home, a speck of gray
No more nor higher, traced the wondrous plan,
The wise appliances which seem to shape
The dwelling-place of man,—

Nor halted here, but thirsted still to know,
And, with half-blinded eyesight, loved to pore
On that scarce visible world, born of decay
Or stranded on the shore.

Marked how the Mother works with earth and gas,
And with what subtle alchemy knows to blend
The vast conflicting forces of the world
To one harmonious end;

And, nightly gazing on the splendid stars,
Essayed in vain with reverent eye to trace
The chain of miracles by which men learnt
The mysteries of space;

And toiled awhile with spade and hammer, to learn
The long long sequences of life, and those
Unnumbered cycles of forgotten years
Ere life's faint light arose;

And loved to trace the strange sweet life of flowers,
And all the scarce suspected links which span
The gulf betwixt the fungus and the tree,
And 'twixt the tree and man.

Then suddenly, "What is it that I know?
I know the shows and changes, not the cause;
I know but long successions, which usurp
The name and rank of Laws.

"And what if the design I think I see
Be but a pitiless order, through the long
Slow wear of chance and suffering working out
Salvation for the strong?

"How else, if scheme there be, can I explain
The cripple or the blind, the ravening jaw,
The infinite waste of life, the plague, the sword,
The evil, thriftless law,

"Or seeming errors of design, or strange
Complexities of structure, which suggest
A will which sported with its power, or worked
Not careful for the best?"

I could not know the scheme, nor therefore spend
My soul in painful efforts to conform
With those who lavished life and brain to trace
The story of a worm;

Nor yet with those who, prizing overmuch
The unmeaning jargon of their science, sought
To hide, by arrogance, from God and man
Their poverty of thought,

And, blind with fact and stupefied by law,
Lost sight of the Creator, and became
Dull bigots, narrowed to a hopeless creed,
And priests in all but name.

* * * *

Thus, tired with seeking truth, and not content
To dwell with those weak souls who love to feign
Unending problems of the life and love
Which they can ne'er explain;

Nor those who, parrot-like, are proud to clothe
In twenty tongues the nothing that they know;
Nor those whom barren lines and numbers blind
To all things else below;

And half-suspecting, when the poet sang
And drew my soul to his, and round me cast

Fine cords of fancy, but a sleight of words,
Part stolen from the past—

I thought, My life lies not with books, but men!
Surely the nobler part is his who guides
The State's great ship through hidden rocks and sands,
Rude winds and popular tides,—

A freeman amongst freemen,—and contrives,
By years of thought and labour, to withdraw
Some portion of their load from lives bent down
By old abusive law!

A noble task; but how to walk with those
Who by fate's subtle irony ever hold
The freeman's ear—the cunning fluent knave,
The dullard big with gold?

And how, when worthier souls bore rule, to hold
Faction more dear than Truth, or stoop to cheat,
With cozening words and shallow flatteries
The Solons of the street?

Or, failing this, to wear a hireling sword—
Ready, whate'er the cause, to kill and slay,
And float meanwhile, a gilded butterfly,
My brief inglorious day—

Or, in the name of Justice, to confuse,
For hire, with shameless tongue and subtle brain,
Dark riddles, which, to honest minds unwarped,
Were easy to explain—

Or, with keen salutary knife, to carve
For hire the shrinking limb; or else to feign
Wise words and healing powers, though knowing naught
In face of death and pain—

Or grub all day for pelf 'mid hides and oils,
Like a mole in some dark alley, to rise at last,
After dull years, to wealth and ease, when all
The use for them is past—

Or else to range myself with those who seek
By reckless throws with chance, by trick and cheat,
Swift riches lacking all the zest of toil,
And only bitter-sweet.

Or worst, and still for hire, to feign to hear
A voice which called not, calling me to tell
Now of an indolent heaven, and now, obscene
Threats of a bodily hell.

* * * *

Then left I all, and ate the husks of sense;
Oh, passionate coral lips! oh, shameful fair!
Bright eyes, and careless smiles, and reckless mirth!
Oh, golden rippling hair!

Oh, rose-strewn feasts, made glad with wine and song
And laughter-lit! oh, whirling dances sweet,
When the mad music faints awhile and leaves
Low beats of rhythmic feet!

Oh, glorious terrible moments, when the sheen
Of silk, and straining limbs flash thundering by,
And name and fame and honour itself, await
Worse hazard than the die!

All these were mine. Then, thought I, I have found
The truth at last; here comes not doubt to pain;
Here things are what they seem, not figments, born
Of a too busy brain.

But soon, the broken law avenged itself;
For, oh, the pity of it! to feel the fire
Grow colder daily, and the soaring soul
Sunk deep in grosser mire.

And oh, the pity of it! to drag down lives
Which had been happy else, to ruin, and waste
The precious affluence of love, which else
Some humble home had graced.

And oh! the weariness of feasts and wine;
The jests where mirth was not, the nerves unstrung,
The throbbing brain, the tasteless joys, which keep
Their savour for the young.

These came upon me, and a vague unrest,
And then a gnawing pain; and then I fled,
As one some great destruction passes, flees
A city of the dead.

* * * *

Then, pierced by some vague sense of guilt and pain,
"God help me!" I said. "There is no help in life,
Only continual passions waging war,
Cold doubt and endless strife!"

But He is full of peace, and truth, and rest,
I give myself to Him; I yearn to find
What words divine have fallen from age to age
Fresh from the Eternal mind.

And so, upon the reverend page I dwelt,
Which shows Him formless, self-contained, all-wise,
Passionless, pure, the soul of visible things,
Unseen by mortal eyes;

Who oft across dim gulfs of time revealed,
Grew manifest, then passed and left a foul
Thick mist of secular error to obscure
The upward gazing soul;

And that which told of Opposite Principles,
Of Light with Darkness warring evermore;
Ah me! 'twas nothing new, I had felt the fight
Within my soul before.

And those wise Answers of the far-off sage,
So wise, they shut out God, and can enchain
To-day in narrow bonds of foolishness
The subtle Eastern brain.

And last, the hallowed pages dear to all,
Which bring God down to earth, a King to fight
With His people's hosts; or speaking awful words
From out the blaze of light,—

Which tell how earthly chiefs who loved the right,
Were dear to Him; and how the poet king
Sang, from his full repentant heart, the strains
Sad hearts still love to sing.

And how the seer was filled with words of fire,
And passionate scorn and lofty hate of Ill,
So pure, that we who hear them seem to hear
God speaking to us still,

But mixed with these, dark tales of fraud and blood,
Like weeds in some fair garden; till I said,
"These are not His; how shall a man discern
The living from the dead?

"I will go to that fair Life, the flower of lives;
I will prove the infinite pity and love which shine
From each recorded word of Him who once
Was human, yet Divine.

"Oh, pure sweet life, crowned by a godlike death;
Oh, tender healing hand; oh, words that give
Rest to the weary, solace to the sad,
And bid the hopeless live!

"Oh, pity, spurning not the penitent thief;
Oh, wisdom, stooping to the little child;
Oh, infinite purity, taking thought for lives
By sinful stains defiled!

"With thee, will I dwell, with thee."
But as I mused,
Those pale ascetic words renewed my doubt:
The cheek, which to the smiter should be turned,
The offending eye plucked out.

The sweet impossible counsels which may seem
Too perfect for our need; nor recognise
A duty to the world, not all reserved
For that beyond the skies.

"And was it truth, or some too reverent dream
Which scorned God's precious processes of birth,
And spurned aside for Him, the changeless laws
Which rule all things of earth?

"Or how shall some strange breach of natural law
Be proof of moral truth; yet how deny
That He who holds the cords of life and death
Can raise up those who die?

"Yet how to doubt that God may be revealed;
Is He more strange, incarnate, shedding tears,
Than when the unaided scheme fulfils itself
Through countless painful years?

"But if revealed He be, how to escape
The critic who dissects the sacred page,
Till God's gift hangs on grammar, and the saint
Is weaker than the sage!"

These warring thoughts held me, and more; but when
The simple life divine shone forth no more,
And the fair truth came veiled in stately robes
Of philosophic lore;

And 'twas the apostle spoke, and not the Christ;
The scholar, not the Master; and the Church
Defined itself, and sank to earthly thrones:
"Surely," I said, "my search
"Is vain;" and when with magical rite and spell
They killed the Lord, and sought with narrow creed,
Half-fancy, half of barbarous logic born,
To heal the hearts that bleed;

And heretic strove with heretic, and the Church
Slew for the truth itself had made: again,
"Can these things be of Him?" I thought, and felt
The old undying pain.

And yet the fierce false prophet turned to God
The gross idolatrous East; and far away,
Beyond the horrible wastes, the lewd knave makes
A Paradise to-day.

* * * *

Yet deep within my being still I kept
Two sacred fires alight through all the strife,—
Faith in a living God; faith in a soul
Dowered with an endless life.

And therefore though the world's foundations shook,
I was not all unhappy; knowing well
That He whose hand sustained me would not bear
To leave my soul in hell.

But now I looked on nature with strange eyes,
For something whispered, "Surely all things pass;
All life decays on earth or air or sea,—
All wither like the grass."

"These are, then have been, we ourselves decline,
And cease and turn to earth, and are as they:
Shall our dear animals rise; shall the dead flowers
Bloom in another May?

"The seed springs like the herb, but not the same;
And like us, not the same, our children rise;
The type survives, though suffering gradual change,
The individual dies.

"How shall one seek to sever, e'en in thought,
Body and soul; how show to doubting eyes
That this returns to dust, while the other soars
Deathless beyond the skies?

"And if it be a lovely dream—no more,
And life is ended with our latest breath,
May not the same sweet fancy have devised
The Lord of life and death?

"We know Him not at all, nor may conceive
Beginning or yet ending. Is it more
To image an Eternal World, than one
Where nothing was before?

"Whence came the Maker? Was He uncreate?
Then why must all things else created be?
Was He created? Then, the Lord I serve,
Lies farther off than He.

"Or if He be indeed, yet the soul dies.
Why, what is He to us? not here, not here!
His judgments fall, wrong triumphs here—right sinks;
What hope have we, or fear?"

I could not answer, yet when others came,
Affirming He was not, and bade me live
In the present only, seizing unconcerned
What pleasures life could give,

My doubt grown fiercer, scoffed at them, "Oh fools,
And blind, your joys I know; the universe
Confutes you; can you see right yield to might,
The better to the worse,—

"Nor burn to adjust them? If it were a dream,
Would all men dream it? Can your thought conceive
The end you tell of better than the life,
Which all men else believe?

"Or if we shrink as from a hateful voice,
From mute analogies of frame and shape,
Surely no other than a breath Divine
Gave reason to the ape."

"What made all men to call on God? what taught
The soaring soul its lofty heavenward flight?
What led us to discern the strait bounds set,
To sever wrong from right?

"Be sure, no easier is it to declare
He is not than He is:" and I who sought
Firm ground, saw here the same too credulous faith
And impotence of thought.

And when they brought me their fantastic creed,
With a figment for a god—mock ceremonies—
Man worshipping himself—mock priests to kill
The soul's high liberties,—

I spurned the folly with a curse, and turned
To dwell with my own soul apart, and there
Found no companion but the old doubt grown
To an immense despair.

* * * * *

Then, as a man who, on a sunny day,
Feeling some trivial ache, unknown before,
Goes careless from his happy home, and seeks
A wise physician's door.

And when he comes forth, neither heeds nor sees
The joyous tide of life or smiling sky,
But always, always hears a ceaseless voice
Repeating "Thou shalt die."

So all the world flowed by, and all my days
Passed like an empty vision, and I said,
"There is no help in life; seeming to live,
We are but as the dead."

And thus, I tossed about long time; at last
Nature rebelled beneath the constant pain,
And the dull sleepless care forgot itself,
In frenzy of the brain.

And sometimes all was blackness, unrelieved,
And sometimes I would wander day and night,
Through fiery long arcades, which seared my brain
With flakes of blinding light.

And then I lay unmoved in a gray calm;
Not life nor death, and the past came to seem
Thought, act, faith, doubt, things of but little worth
A dream within a dream.

* * * * *

But, when I saw my country like a cloud,
Sink in the East, and the free ocean-wind
Fanned life's returning flame and roused again
Slow pulse and languid mind;

Soon the great rush and mystery of the sea,
The grisly depths, the great waves surging on,
Dark with white spuming crests which threaten death,
Swoop by, and so are gone.

And the strong sense of weakness, as we sped—
Tossed high, plunged low, through many a furious night,

And slept in faith, that some poor seaman woke
To guide our course aright.

All lightened something of my load, and seemed
To solace me a little, for they taught,
That the impalpable unknown might stretch,
Even to the realms of thought.

And so I wandered into many lands,
And over many seas; I felt the chill
Which in mid-ocean strikes on those who near
The spire-crowned icy hill,

And threaded fairy straits beneath the palms,
Where, year by year, the tepid waters sleep;
And where, round coral isles, the sudden sea
Sinks its unfathomed deep.

Upon the savage feverish swamp, I trod
The desert sands, the fat low plains of the East;
On glorious storied shores and those where man
Was ever as the beast.

And, day by day, I felt my frozen soul,
Soothed by the healing influence of change,
Grow softer, registering day by day,
Things new, unknown, and strange.

Not therefore, holding what it spurned before,
Nor solving riddles, which before perplexed;
But with new springs of sympathy, no more
By impotent musings vexed.

* * * * *

And last of all I knew the lovely land
Which was most mighty, and is still most fair;
Where world-wide rule and heavenward faith have left
Their traces everywhere.

And as from province to province I wandered on,
City or country, all was fair and sweet;
The air, the fields, the vines, the dark-eyed girls,
The dim arcaded street;

The minsters lit for vespers, in the cool;
Gay bridals, solemn burials, soaring chant,
Spent in high naves, gray cross, and wayside shrine,
And kneeling suppliant;

And painting, strong to aid the eye of faith,
And sculpture, figuring awful destinies:
Thin campaniles, crowning lake-lit hills,
And sea-worn palaces.

Then, as the sweet days passed me one by one,
New tides of life through body and soul were sent;
And daily sights of beauty worked a calm
Ineffable content.

And soon, as in the spring, ere frosts are done,
Deep down in earth the black roots quicken and start,

I seemed to feel a spring of faith and love
Stir through my frozen heart.
* * * *
Till one still summer eve, when as I mused
By a fair lake, from many a silvery bell,
Thrilled from tall towers, I heard the Angelus,
Deep peace upon me fell.

And following distant organ-swells, I passed
Within the circuit of a lofty wall,
And thence within dim aisles, wherein I heard
The low chant rise and fall.

And dark forms knelt upon the ground, and all
Was gloom, save where some dying day-beam shone,
High in the roof, or where the votive lamp
Burned ever dimly on.

Then whether some chance sound or solemn word
Across my soul a precious influence cast,
Or whether the fair presence of a faith
Born of so great a Past,

Smote me! the wintry glooms were past and done,
And once again the Spring-time, and once more
Faith from its root bloomed heaven-ward—and I sank
Weeping upon the floor.
* * * *
Long time within that peaceful home I dwelt
With those grave brethren, spending silent days
And watchful nights, in solemn reverent thought,
Made glad by frequent praise.

And the awakened longing for the Truth,
With the great dread of what had been before,
The ordered life, the nearer view of heaven,
Worked on me more and more.

So that, I lived their life of prayer and praise,
Alike in summer heats and wintry snows,
Pacing chill cloisters 'neath the waning stars,
Long ere the slow sun rose.

And speaking little, and bringing down my soul
With frequent fast and vigil, saw at length
Truth's face show daily clearer and more clear
To failing bodily strength.

For living in a mystical air, and parched
With thirst for faith and truth; at last I brought
The old too-active logic to enforce
The current of my thought.

And wishing to believe, I took for true
The shameless subtleties which dare to tell
How the Eternal charged one hand to hold
The keys of heaven and hell.

"For if a faith be given, then must there be
A Church to guard it, and a tongue to speak,
And an unerring mind to rule alike
The strong souls and the weak."

"And, because God's high purpose stands not still,
But He is ever with His own, the tide
Of miracle and dogma ceases not,
But flows down strong and wide,

"To the world's ending." So my mind fell prone,
Before the Church; and teachings new and strange;
The wafer, which to spirit and sense sustains
Some dim incredible change—

The substance which tho' altered yet retains
The self-same accidents; the Virgin Queen,
Immaculate in birth, and without death,
Soaring to worlds unseen—

The legends, sometimes foolish, ofttimes fair,
Of saints who set all natural laws at naught;
The miracles, the portents, not the charm,
Of the old Pagan thought—

These shook me not at all, who only longed
To drain the healing draught of faith again,
And dreaded, with a coward dread, the thought
Of the old former pain.

The more incredible the tale, the more
The merit of belief; the more I sought
To reason out the truth, I knew the more
The impotence of thought.

And thus the swift months passed in prayer and praise,
Bringing the day when those tall gates should close,
And shut me out from thought and life and all
Our heritage of woes.

* * * *

Then, one day, when the end drew very near,
Which should blot out the past for ever, and I
Waited impatient, longing for the hour
When my old self should die;

I knelt at noon, within the darkened aisle,
Before a doll tawdry with rich brocade,
And all ablaze with gems, the precious gifts
Which pious hands had made:

Nor aught of strange I saw, so changed was I,
In that dull fetish; nay, heaven's gate unsealed,
And the veiled angels bent before the throne,
Where sat their Lord revealed.

While like a flood the ecstasy of faith
Surged high and higher, swift to fall at last
Lower and lower, when the rapture failed
And faded, and was past.

Lo, a sweet sunbeam, straying through the gloom
Smote me, as when the first low shaft of day
Aslant the night-clouds shoots, and momently
Chases the mists away.

And that ideal heaven was closed, and all
That reverend house turned to a darkened room,
A den of magic, masking with close fumes
The odours of the tomb.

* * * *

Then passed I forth. Again my soul was free;
Again the summer sun and exquisite air
Made all things smile; and life and joy and love
Beamed on me everywhere.

And over all the earth there went a stir,
A movement, a renewal. Round the spring
In the broad village street, the dark-eyed girls
Were fain to dance and sing

For the glad time. The children played their play,
Like us who play at life; light bursts of song
Came from the fields, and to the village church
A bridal passed along.

Far on the endless plain, the swift steam drew
A soft white riband. Down the lazy flow
Of the broad stream, I marked, round sylvan bends,
The seaward barges go.

The brown vine-dresser, bent among his vines,
Ceased sometimes from his toil to hold on high
His laughing child, while his deep-bosomed wife
Cheerful sat watching by.

And all the world was glad, and full of life,
And I grew glad with it, and quickly came
To see my past life as it was, and feel
A salutary shame.

For what was it I had wished? To set aside
The perfect scheme of things, to live apart
A sterile life, divorced from light and love,
Sole, with an empty heart.

And wherefore to fatigue the Eternal ear
With those incessant hymns of barren praise?
Does not a sweeter sound go up to Him
From well-spent toilsome days,—

And natural life, refined by honest love,
And sweet unselfish liturgies of home,
Heaven's will, borne onward by obedient souls,
Careless of what may come?

What need has He for praise? Forest and field,
The winds, the seas, the plains, the mountains, praise
Their Maker, with a grander litany
Than our poor voices raise.

What need has He of them? And looking back
To those gray walls which late had shown so fair,
I felt as one who from a dungeon 'scapes
To free unfettered air.

And half distrustful of myself, and full
Of terror of what might be, once more fled,
With scarce a glance behind, as one who flees
A city of the dead.

* * * *

All through that day and night I journeyed on
To the northward. With the dawn a tender rose
Blushed in mid-heaven, and looking up, I saw
Far off, the eternal snows.

Then all day higher, higher, from the plain,
Beyond the tinkling folds, beyond the fair
Dense, self-sown chestnuts, then the scented pines,
And then an eager air,

And then the ice-fields and the cloudless heavens;
And ever as I climbed, I seemed to cast
My former self behind, and all the rags
Of that unlovely past:

The doubts, the superstitions, the regrets,
The awakening; as the soul which hears the loud
Archangel summon, rising, casts behind
Corruption and the shroud.

For I was come into a higher land,
And breathed a purer air than in the past;
And He who brought me to the dust of death
Had holpen me at last.

* * * *

What then? A dream of sojourn 'mid the hills,
A stir of homeward travel, swift and brief,
Because the very hurry of the change
Brought somewhat of relief.

A dream of a fair city, the chosen seat
Of all the pleasures, impotent to stay
The thirsty soul, whose water-springs were laid
In dear lands far away.

A dream of the old crowds, the smoke, the din
Of our dear mother, dearer far than fair;
The home of lofty souls and busy brains,
Keener for that thick air.

Then a long interval of patient toil,
Building the gradual framework of my art,
With eyes which cared no more to seek the whole,
Fast fixed upon the part.

And mind, which shunned the general, absorbed
In the particular only, till it saw
What boundless possibilities lie for men
'Twixt matter and high law!

How that which may be rules, not that which must;
And absolute truth revealed, would serve to blind
The soul's bright eye, and sear with tongues of flame
The sinews of the mind.

How in the web of life, the thread of truth
Is woven with error; yet a vesture fair
Comes from the loom—a precious royal robe
Fit for a god to wear.

Till at the last, upon the crest of toil
Sat Knowledge, and I gained a newer truth:
Not the pale queen of old, but a soft maid,
Filled with a tender ruth.

And, ray by ray, the clear-faced unity
Orbed itself forth, and lo! the noble throng
Of patient souls, who sought the truth in act,
And grew, through silence, strong.

Till prizing union more than dissidence,
And holding dear the race, I came to prove
A spring of sympathy within, which swelled
To a deep stream of love.

And Knowledge gave me gold, and power, and fame,
And honour; and Love, a clearer, surer view:
Thus in calm depths I moored my weary soul
Fast anchored to the True.

* * * *
* * *

And now the past lies far away, and I
Can scarce recall those vanished days again;
No more the old faith stirs me, and no more
Comes the old barren pain.

For now each day brings its appointed toil,
And every hour its grateful sum of care;
And life grows sweeter, and the gracious world
Shows day by day more fair.

For now I live a two-fold life; my own
And yet another's; and another heart
Which beats to mine, makes glad the lonely world
Where once I lived apart.

And little lives are mine to keep unstained,
Strange mystic growths, which day by day expand,
Like the flowers they are, and set me in a fair
Perpetual wonderland.

New senses, gradual language, dawning mind,
And with each day that passes, traced more strong
On those white tablets, awful characters
That tell of right and wrong.

And what hand wrote them? One brief life declined,
Went from us, and is not. Ah! what and where
Is that fair soul? Surely it somewhere blooms
In purer, brighter air.

What took it hence, and whither? Can I bear
To think, that I shall turn to a herb, a tree,
A little earth or lime, nor care for these, Whatever things may be?

Or shall the love and pity I feel for these
End here, nor find a higher type or task?
I am as God to them, bestowing more
Than they deserve or ask.

And shall I find no Father? Shall my being
Aspire in vain for ever, and always tend
To an impossible goal, which none shall reach,—
An aim without an end?

Or, shall I heed them when they bid me take
No care for aught but what my brain may prove?
I, through whose inmost depths from birth to death,
Strange heavenward currents move;

Vague whispers, inspirations, memories,
Sanctities, yearnings, secret questionings,
And oft amid the fullest blaze of noon,
The rush of hidden wings?

Nay; my soul spurns it! Less it is to know
Than to have faith: not theirs who cast away
The mind God gave them, eager to adore
Idols of baser clay.

But theirs, who marking out the bounds of mind,
And where thought rules, content to understand,
Know that beyond its kingdom lies a dread
Immeasurable land.

A land which is, though fainter than a cloud,
Full of sweet hopes and awful destinies:
A dim land, rising when the eye is clear
Across the trackless seas.

* * * *

O life! O death! O faithful wandering soul!
O riddle of being, too hard to understand!
These are Thy dreadful secrets, Lord; and we
The creatures of Thy hand.

O wells of consciousness, too deep for thought,
These are Thy dwelling, awful Lord Divine;
Thine are we still, the creatures of Thy hand,
Living and dying, Thine.

THE WEARY RIVER.

THERE is a ceaseless river,
Which flows down evermore
Into a wailing ocean,
A sea without a shore

Broken by laughing ripple,
Foaming with angry swell,
Sweet music as of heaven,
Deep thunder as of hell.

Gay fleets float down upon it,
And sad wrecks, full of pain:
But all alike it hurries
To that unchanging main.

Sometimes 'tis foul and troubled,
And sometimes clear and pure;
But still the river flows, and still
The dull sea doth endure.

And thus 'twill flow for ever,
Till time shall cease to be:
O weary, weary river,
O bitter, barren sea.

TRUTH IN FALSEHOOD.

YOUR little hand in mine I rest:
The slender fingers, white and long,
Lie in my broad palm, rude and strong,
Like birdlings in their nest.

Yours, like yourself, so soft and white,
So delicately free from soil;
Mine sunbrowned, hard with moil and toil,
And seamed with scars of fight.

Dear love! sometimes your innocence
Strikes me with sudden chills of fear;
What if you saw before you, dear,
The secret gulfs of sense?—

The coarseness, the deceit, the sin,
We know, who 'mid the sordid crowd
Must press, nor midst the tumult loud
Can hear the voice within?

What if you saw me with the eyes
Of others,—nay, my own,—or heard
The unworthy tale, the biting word,
The sneer that worldlings prize?

Or knew me as I am indeed,
No hero free from blot or stain,
But a poor soul who drags his chain
With halting feet that bleed,—

Who oft-time slips and falls, content,
Though bruised and weary, faint and worn,
He toils all night, if with the morn
When life and strength are spent,

He sees some far-off struggling ray,
Dispel the palpable obscure,
And on the eastern hills, the pure
White footprints of the day?

But you, oh love, can never know
These darkling paths; for you the light
Shines always changeless, always bright,
The self-same tempered glow.

And love with innocence combined
The nunnery of your heart shall guard,
And faith with eye unfailing ward
The jewel of your mind.

So be it: I would sooner be
Steeped to the lips in lie and cheat,
A very monster of deceit,
Than bare myself to thee.

Nay, rather would I dare to hear
At that great Day from lips of flame,
Blown to all souls my tale of shame,
Than whispered in thine ear.

Strange riddle, to those who never knew
Of good with evil intertwined
The two-fold self, the links that bind
The false things to the true;

But to the seeing eye more clear
Than blaze of noonday. So be sure
If such deceit might keep thee pure,
I'd glory in it, dear.

TWO VOYAGES.

Two ships which meet upon the ocean waste,
And stay a little while, and interchange
Tidings from two strange lands, which lie beneath
Each its own heaven and particular stars,

And fain would tarry; but the impatient surge
Calls, and a cold wind from the setting sun
Divides them, and they sadly drift apart,
And fade, and sink, and vanish, 'neath the verge—

One to the breathless plains and treacherous seas
Smitten by the tyrannous Sun, where mind alone
Withers amid the bounteous outer-world,
And prodigal Nature dwarfs and chains the man—

One to cold rains, rude winds, and hungry waves
Spilt on the frowning granite, niggard suns,
And snows and mists which starve the vine and palm,
But nourish to more glorious growth the man.

One to the scentless flowers and songless birds,
Swift storms and poison stings and ravening jaws:
One to spring violets and nightingales,
Sleek-coated kine and honest gray-eyed skies.

One to lie helpless on the stagnant sea,
Or sink in sleep beneath the hurricane:
One to speed on, white-winged, through summer airs,
Or sow the rocks with ruin—who shall tell?

So with two souls which meet on life's broad deep,
And cling together but may not stay; for Time
And Age and chills of Absence wear the links
Which bind them, and they part for evermore—

One to the tropic lands of fame and gold,
And feverish thirst and weariness of soul;
One to long struggles and a wintry life,
Decked with one sweet white bloom of happy love.

For each, one fate, to live and die apart,
Save for some passing smile of kindred souls;
Then drift away alone, on opposite tides,
To one dark harbour and invisible goal.

THE WISE RULE.

"TIME flies too fast, too fast our life decays."
Ah, faithless! in the present lies our being;
And not in lingering love for vanished days!

"Come, happy future, when my soul shall live."
Ah, fool! thy life is now, and not again;
The future holds not joy nor pain to give!

"Live for what is: future and past are naught."
Ah, blind! a flash, and what shall be, has been.
Where, then, is that for which thou takest thought?

Not in what has been, is, or is to be,
The wise soul lives, but in a wider time,
Which is not any, but contains the three!

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING.

"CRY, cry aloud in the land, cry aloud in the streets of the city;
Cry and proclaim that no more shall the blood of the people be shed.
Too long have the great ones waxed strong, without justice or any pity,
Too long have they ground down the poor, and eaten the people as bread."
Thus said the voice from the dead.

"Terrible voice, I said, immoderate, voice of unreason,
Not of themselves do the lowly ones mourn, or the great ones rejoice;
He who hath made them unequal, hath made all things in their season;
If they are mighty and strong, they were made without freedom or choice."
"Cry, cry aloud," said the voice.

"How shall the sins of the few be reckoned against the many?
Are there no tender hearts and kind 'midst the selfish and proud;
Merciful souls and pure, full of love for their suffering brothers;
Pitiful, touched with compassion and care for the desolate crowd?"
"Cry," said the voice, "cry aloud."

"Nay, but the world is ruled by merciless rules unbending;
The feeble folk fade from the earth, and only the mighty remain;
Not men alone, but all things send upwards a clamour unending;
Always the whole creation travails in sorrow and pain.'
"Cry,' said the voice, "cry again."

"Are not our sins and our fathers' worked out in our children's sorrow?
Does not excess of laughter sink at its close in a sigh?
Mirth and enjoyment to-day turn to pain and repentance to-morrow;
Thousands are born every hour, in the place of the thousands who die."
"Cry," said the stubborn voice, "cry."

"Lo! He hath made all things; good and evil, sorrow and pleasure;
Not as your ways are His ways, yet are ye not all in His hand?
Just is He, though ye know not the measure wherewith He will measure;
Dark things shall one day be clear; to obey is to understand!"
Thus that voice, solemn and grand.

OTHER DAYS.

O THRUSH, your song is passing sweet,
But never a song that you have sung
Is half so sweet as thrushes sang
When my dear love and I were young.

O Roses, you are sweet and red,
Yet not so red nor sweet as were
The roses that my mistress loved
To bind within her flowing hair.

Time filches fragrance from the flower;
Time steals the sweetness from the song;
Love only scorns the tyrant's power,
And with the growing years grows strong.

THE TRUE MAN.

TAKE thou no thought for aught save right and truth,
Life holds for finer souls no equal prize;
Honours and wealth are baubles to the wise,
And pleasure flies on swifter wing than youth.

If in thy heart thou bearest seeds of hell,
Though all men smile, yet what shall be thy gain?
Though all men frown, if truth and right remain,
Take thou no thought for aught; for it is well.

Take thou no thought for aught; nor deem it shame
To lag behind while knaves and dullards rise;
Thy soul asks higher guerdon, purer fame,
Than to loom large and grand in vulgar eyes.
Though thou shouldst live thy life in vile estate,
Silent, yet knowing that deep within thy breast
Unkindled sparks of genius lie repressed,—
Greater is he who is, than seemeth, great.

If thou shouldst spend long years of hope deferred,
Chilled through with doubt, and sickening to despair;
If as cares thicken friends grow cold and rare,
Nor favouring voice in all the throng be heard;
If all men praise him whom thou know'st to be
Of lower aims and duller brain than thine,—
Take thou no thought, though all men else combine
In thy despite: their praise is naught to thee.

Bethink thee of the irony of fate,
How great men die inglorious and alone;
How Dives sits within upon his throne,
While good men crouch with Lazarus at the gate.
Our tree of life set on Time's hither shore
Blooms like the secular aloe once an age:
The great names scattered on the historic page
Are few indeed, but the unknown are more.

Waste is the rule of life: the gay flowers spring,
The fat fruits drop, upon the untrodden plain;
Sea-sands at ebb are silvered o'er with pain;
The fierce rain beats and mars the feeble wing;
Fair forms grow fairer still for deep disease;
Hearts made to bless are spent apart, alone.
What claim hast thou to joy, while others moan?
God made us all, and art thou more than these?

Take thou no care for aught save truth and right;
Content, if such thy fate, to die obscure;
Wealth palls and honours, Fame may not endure,
And loftier souls soon weary of delight.
Keep innocence; be all a true man ought;
Let neither pleasure tempt, nor pains appal:
Who hath this, he hath all things, having naught;
Who hath it not, hath nothing, having all.

PASSING.

To spring, to bloom, to fade,—
This is the sum of the laborious years;
Life preludes death as laughter ends in tears:
All things that God has made
Suffer perpetual change, and may not long endure.

We alter day by day;
Each little moment, as life's current rolls,
Stamps some faint impress on our yielding souls;
We may not rest nor stay,
Drifting on tides unseen to one dread goal and sure.

Our being is compassed round
With miracles; on this our life-long sleep,
Strange whispers rise from the surrounding deep,
Like that weird ocean sound
Borne in still summer nights on weary watching ears.

The selves we leave behind
Affright us like the ghosts of friends long dead;
The old love vanished in the present dread,
They visit us to find
New sorrows, alien hopes, strange pleasures, other fears.

FETTERS.

Oh who shall say that we are free!
Surely life's chains are strong to bind
From youth to age, from birth to death,
Body and mind.

We run the riotous race of youth,
Then turn from evil things to good:
'Tis but a slower pulse, a chill
Of youth's hot blood.

We mount the difficult steeps of thought,
Or pace the dusty paths of gain:
'Tis but that sense receding leaves
A keener brain.

Time takes this too, and then we turn
Our dim eyes to the hidden shore;
Life palls, and yet we long to live,—
Ay, nothing more.

RICH AND WISE.

Wild flowers in spring were sweet to childish hands
As riches to the wretch possessing naught;
And as the water-springs in desert lands
Are the pale victories of patient thought:
But sweeter, dearest, sweeter far,
The hours when we together are.

No more I know the childish joys of old,
Nor yet have learnt the grave delights of age:
A miser, gloat I on thy locks' rich gold;
A student, ponder on thy soul's fair page.
Thus do I grow both rich and wise,
On these fair locks and those deep eyes.

Therefore in wit and wealth do I increase,
Poring on thee, as on a fair writ book;
No panic-fear can make that rich stream cease,
Nor doubt confuse the crystal of thy look.
Some to the mart, some to the oratory,
May turn them: thou art both to me.

LOVE IN DEATH.

Dear heart! what a little time it is since Francis and I used to walk
From church in the still June evenings together, busy with loving talk;
And now he is gone, far away over seas, to some strange foreign country,—and I
Shall never rise from my bed any more, till the day when I come to die.

I tried not to think of him during the prayers; but when his dear voice I heard,
I failed to take part in the hymn; for my heart fluttered up to my throat like a bird,
And scarcely a word of the sermon I caught. I doubt 'twas a grievous sin;
But 'twas only one poor little hour in the week that I had to be happy in.

When the blessing was given, and we left the dim aisles for the light of the evening star;
Though I durst not lift up my eyes from the ground, yet I knew that he was not far.
And I hurried on, though I fain would have stayed, till I heard his footstep draw near;
And love rising up in my breast like a flame, cast out every shadow of fear.

Ah me! 'twas a pleasant pathway home,—a pleasant pathway and sweet;
Ankle deep through the purple clover; breast high 'mid the blossoming wheat;
I can hear the landrails prate through the dew, and the night-jars' tremulous thrill,
And the nightingale pouring her passionate song from the hawthorn under the hill.

One day, when we came to the wicket gate, 'neath the elms, where we used to part,
His voice began to falter and break as he told me I had his heart.
And I whispered back that mine was his: we knew what we felt long ago;
Six weeks are as long as a lifetime almost, when you love each other so.

So we put up the banns, and were man and wife, in the sweet fading time of the year,
And till Christmas was over and past, I knew no shadow of sorrow or fear.
It seems like a dream already, alas! a sweet dream vanished and gone,
So hurried and brief while passing away, so long to look back upon.

I had only had him three little months, and the world lay frozen and dead,
When the summons came, which we feared and hoped, and he sailed over seas for our bread.
Ah, well! it is fine to be wealthy and grand, and never to need to part;
But 'tis better far to love and be poor than be rich with an empty heart.

Though I thought 'twould have killed me to lose him at first, yet was he not going for me?
So I hid deep down in my breast all the grief, which I knew it would pain him to see.
He'd surely be back by the autumn, he said; and since his last passionate kiss
He has scarcely been out of my thoughts, day or night, for a moment, from that day to this.

When I wrote to him how I thought it would be, and he answered so full of love,
Ah! there was not an angel happier than I, in all the white chorus above.

And I seemed to be lonely no longer, the days and the weeks passed so swiftly away;
And the March winds died, and the sweet April showers gave place to the blossoms of May.

And then came the sad summer eve, when I sat with the little frock in the sun,
And Patience ran in with the news of the ship—Ah, well! may His will be done.
They said that all hands were lost, and I swooned away on the floor like a stone;
And another life came, ere I knew he was safe, and my own was over and gone.

* * * * * * *

And now I lie helpless here, and shall never rise up again;
I grow weaker and weaker, day by day, till my weakness itself is a pain.
Every morning the slow dawn creeps; every evening I see from my bed
The orange-gold fade into lifeless gray, and the old evening star overhead.

Sometimes by the twilight dim, or the awful birth of the day,
As I lie, very still, not asleep nor awake, my soul seems to flutter away;
And I float far beyond the stars, till I thrill with a rapturous pain,
And the feeble touch of a tiny hand recalls me to life again.

And the doctor says she will live. Ah! 'tis hard to leave her alone,
And to think she will never know, in the world, the love of the mother who's gone.
They will tell her of me, by-and-by, and perhaps she will shed me a tear;
But if I should stoop to her bed in the night, she would start with a horrible fear.

She will grow into girlhood, I trust, and will bask in the light of love,
And I, if I gain to see her at all, shall only look on from above.
I shall see her and cannot aid, though she fall into evil and woe.
Ah, how can the angels find heart to rejoice, when they think of their dear ones below?

And Francis, he too will forget me, and go on the journey of life;
And I hope, though I dare not think of it yet, will take him another wife—
It will hardly be Patience, I think, though she liked him in days gone by.
Was that why she came? But what thoughts are these for one who is soon to die?

I hope he will come ere I go, though I feel no longer the thirst
For the sound of his voice and the light of his eye, which I used to feel at first.

'Tis not that I care for him less, but death dries, with a finger of fire,
The tender springs of innocent love and the torrents of strong desire.

And I know we shall meet again. I have done many things that are wrong,
But surely the Lord of Life and of Love cannot bear to be angry long.
I am only a girl of eighteen, and have had no teacher but love;
And, it may be, the sorrow and pain I have known will be counted for me above.

For I doubt if the minister knows all the depths of the goodness of God,
When he says, He is jealous of earthly love, and bids me bow down 'neath the rod.
He is learnèd and wise, I know, but somehow to dying eyes
God opens the secret doors of the shrine that are closed to the learnèd and wise.

So now I am ready to go, for I know He will do what is best,
Though He call me away while the sun is on high, like a child sent early to rest.
I should like him to see her first, though the yearning is over and past:
But what is that footstep upon the stair? Oh, my darling at last, at last!

DEAR LITTLE HAND.

DEAR little hand that clasps my own,
  Embrowned with toil and seamed with strife;
Pink little fingers not yet grown
  To the poor strength of after-life,—
    Dear little hand!

Dear little eyes which smile on mine
  With the first peep of morning light;
Now April-wet with tears, or fine
  With dews of pity, or laughing bright.
    Dear little eyes!

Dear little voice, whose broken speech
  All eloquent utterance can transcend;
Sweet childish wisdom strong to reach
  A holier deep than love or friend:
    Dear little voice!

Dear little life! my care to keep
  From every spot and stain of sin;
Sweet soul foredoomed, for joy or pain,
  To struggle and—which? to fail or win?
    Dread mystical life!

STILL WATERS.

A CRUEL little stream I know,
  Which slowly, slowly crawls between
  The ooze banks, fringed with sedges green,
That serve to bind its feeble flow.

So sheltered that no passing breath
  Of west-wind stirs it; nay, the blast
  Which strips the tall elms and is past,
Scarce wakes to life its face of death.

On its black surface year by year
The marsh flowers, grown untimely old,
Shed their soft petals like a tear,
And hopeless drown their faded gold.

Deep in its darkling depths the pike
Darts with his cruel jaws; by night
The black eels, sinuous, serpent-like,
Twist like fell ghosts that fear the light.

Spring shuns it, summer loves it not;
The low fat fields are lit with bloom,
But here the watery sedges rot,
And all the months are clothed with gloom.

Autumn's first footstep sears to brown
Its coarse green fringe; the first cold breath,
Ere yet the oak-leaf flutters down,
Binds its dull life in icy death.

I hate, I hate you, crawling stream!
Dumb, creeping, murderous wretch, I long
To see the sunlit ripples gleam,
To hear the torrent's jubilant song.

But you, dull monster, all the years
Lie rolling on your sullen flood,
And take your fill of mortal tears;
Yet, like the Churchmen, spill not blood.

The dark gap in the ice, the boat
Keel upward, or the drifting oar;
Or, like of old, the little coat,
The white clothes heaped upon the shore;

And some young life is over and gone,
And some fond heart is broken in twain;
And you flow smoothly, smoothly on,
Taking no heed for death or pain.

They come and grapple with hooks until
They reach the slimy deep, where lies
The white thing, very cold and still,
With death's gaze in its stony eyes.

And you just make a ripple, and then
Flow smoothly onward: you who slew
Young innocent lives of painted men,
Long ere the crowded city grew;

And shall in far years yet to be,
Pierce unborn mothers with that sharp pain,
Which only a mother feels when he
Who was her first-born comes again,

A clay-cold heap. I would that I
Had but the archangel's flaming brand;
So would I burn thy dull springs dry,
And choke thy flow with hills of sand.

Yet why? Whatever soft souls prate,
Babbling of universal good,
Love is the sister-child of hate,
And all good things are bought with blood.

Virtue were not if vice were not,
Nor darkness if there were not light.
Creep on; fulfil thy murderous lot;
For Wrong has equal life with Right.

IN REGENT STREET.

ONE of the nightly hundreds who pass
Wearily, hopelessly, under the gas.

But the old sad words had a strange new tone,
And the wild laugh seemed to sink to a moan.

So that turning as one constrained to look,
The strange sight stifled the voice of rebuke:

For I looked on a girl's face pure and fair,
Blue-eyed, and crowned with a glory of hair,

Such as my dead child-sister might own,
Were she not a child still, but a woman grown;

Full of the tender graces that come
To the cherished light of an ancient home;

Even to that touch of a high disdain,
Which is born of a name without blot or stain.

Strange; as if one should chance to meet
An angel of light in that sordid street!

"O child, what misery brings you here,
To this place of vileness and weeping and fear?"

"I am no more than the rest," she said,
Proudly averting her beautiful head!

Then no response, till some kinder word
Stole in unawares, and her heart was stirred.

"I was a wife but the other day,
Now I am left without hope or stay!

"Work did I ask? What work is for you?
What work can those delicate fingers do?

"Service? But how could I bear to part
From the child with whom I had left my heart?

"Alms?—Yes, at first; then a pitiless No:
The State would provide me whither to go.

"But in sordid prisons it laid my head
With the thief and the harlot; therefore I fled.

"One thing alone had I left untried,
Then I put off the last rag of pride."

"What came? 'You were of an honoured race,
Now you must live with your own disgrace.'

"But many will buy where few will give,
And I die every day that my child may live."

Motherly love sunk to this! Ah, well,
Teach they not how He went down into hell:

Only blind me in heart and brain,
Or ever I look on the like again.

FROM THE DESERT.

THOU hast visited me with Thy storms,
And the vials of Thy sore displeasure
Thou hast poured on my head, like a bitter draught
Poured forth without stint or measure;
Thou hast bruised me as flax is bruised;
Made me clay in the potter's wheel;
Thou hast hardened Thy face like steel,
And cast down my soul to the ground;
Burnt my life in the furnace of fire, like dross,
And left me in prison where souls are bound:
Yet my gain is more than my loss.

What if Thou hadst led my soul
To the pastures where dull souls feed;
And set my steps in smooth paths, far away
From the feet of those that bleed;
Penned me in low, fat plains,
Where the air is as still as death,
And Thy great winds are sunk to a breath,
And Thy torrents a crawling stream,
And the thick steam of wealth goes up day and night,
Till Thy sun gives a veilèd light,
And heaven shows like a vanished dream!

What if Thou hadst set my feet
With the rich in a gilded room;
And made me to sit where the scorners sit,
Scoffing at death and doom!
What if I had hardened my heart
With dark counsels line upon line;
And blunted my soul with meat and wine,
Till my ears had grown deaf to the bitter cry
Of the halt and the weak and the impotent;
Nor hearkened, lapt in a dull content,
To the groanings of those who die!

My being had waxed dull and dead
With the lusts of a gross desire;
But now Thou hast purged me throughly, and burnt
My shame with a living fire.
So burn me, and purge my will
Till no vestige of self remain,
And I stand out white without spot or stain.
Then let Thy flaming angel at last
Smite from me all that has been before;
And sink me, freed from the load of the past,
In Thy dark depths evermore.

DUMB.

ALL men are poets if they might but tell
The dim ineffable changes which the sight
Of natural beauty works on them: the charm
Of those first days of Spring, when life revives
And all the world is bloom: the white-fringed green
Of summer seas swirling around the base

Of overhanging cliffs; the golden gleam
Seen from some breezy hill, where far and wide
The fields grow ripe for harvest; or the storm
Smiting the leaden surf, or echoing
On nightly lakes and unsuspected hills,
Revealed in lurid light; or first perceived,
High in mid-heaven, above the rosy clouds,
The everlasting snows.
And Art can move,
To higher minds, an influence as great
As Nature's self; when the rapt gazer marks
The stainless mother folding arms divine
Around the Eternal Child, or pitying love
Nailed to the dreadful cross, or the white strength
Of happy heathen gods, or serpent coils
Binding the agonized limbs, till from their pain
Is born a thing of beauty for all time.

And more than Nature, more than Art can move
The awakened soul—heroic soaring deeds;
When the young champion falls in hopeless fight,
Striking for home; or when, by truth constrained,
The martyr goes forth cheerful to his fate—
The dungeon, or the torture, or, more hard,
The averted gaze of friends, the loss of love,
The loneliness of soul, which truth too oft
Gives to reward the faith which casts aside
All things for her; or saintly lives obscure,
Spent in a sweet compassion, till they gain,
Living, some glow of heaven; or passionate love,
Bathing our poor world in a mystic light,
Seen once, then lost for ever. These can stir
Life to its depths, till silence grows a load
Too hard to bear, and the rapt soul would fain
Speak with strange tongues which startle as they come,
Like the old saints who spake at Pentecost.

But we are dumb, we are dumb, and may not tell
What stirs within us, though the soul may throb
And tremble with its passion, though the heart
Dissolve in weeping: dumb. Nature may spread
Sublimest sights of beauty; Art inspire
High thoughts and pure of God-like sacrifice;
Yet no word comes. Heroic daring deeds
Thrill us, yet no word comes; we are dumb, we are dumb,
Save that from finer souls at times may rise,
Once in an age, faint inarticulate sounds,

Low halting tones of wonder, such as come
From children looking on the stars, but still
With power to open to the listening ear
The Fair Divine Unknown, and to unseal
Heaven's inner gates before us evermore.

Ah, few and far between! The earth grows green,
Art's glorious message speaks from year to year,
Great deeds and high are done from day to day,
But the voice comes not which has power to wake
The sleeping soul within, and animate
The beauty which informs them, lending speech
To what before was dumb. They come, they go,
Those sweet impressions spent on separate souls,
Like raindrops on the endless ocean-plains,
Lost as they fall. The world rolls on; lives spring,
Blossom, and fade; the play of life is played
More vivid than of old—a wider stage,
With more consummate actors; yet the dull,
Cold deeps of sullen silence swallow up
The strain, and it is lost. But if we might
Paint all things as they are, find voice to speak
The thoughts now mute within us, let the soul
Trace on its sensitive surface vividly,
As does the sun our features, all the play
Of passion, all the changeful tides of thought,
The mystery, the beauty, the delight,
The fear, the horror, of our lives,—our being
Would blaze up heavenward in a sudden flame,
Spend itself, and be lost.
Wherefore 'tis well
This narrow boundary that hedges in
The strong and weak alike. Thought could not live,
Nor speech, in that pure æther which girds round
Life's central dwelling-place. Only the dull
And grosser atmosphere of earth it is
Which vibrates to the sweet birds' song, and brings
Heaven to the wondering ear. Only the stress,
The pain, the hope, the longing, the constraint
Of limited faculties circling round and round
The grim circumference, and finding naught
Of outlet to the dread unknown beyond,
Can lend the poet voice. Only the weight,
The dulness of our senses, which makes dumb
And hushes half the finer utterance,
Makes possible the song, and modulates
The too exalted music, that it falls
So soft upon the listening soul, that life,
Not withered by the awful harmony,
Nor drunk with too much sweetness, nor struck blind

By the too vivid presence of the Unknown,
Fulfils its round of duty—elevated,
Not slain by too much splendour—comforted,
Not thunder-smitten—soothed, not laid asleep—
And ever, through the devious maze of being,
Fares in slow narrowing cycles to the end.

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT.

No angel comes to us to tell
Glad news of our belovèd dead;
Nor at the old familiar board,
They sit among us, breaking bread.

Three days we wait before the tomb,
Nay, life-long years; and yet no more,
For all our passionate tears, we find
The stone rolled backward from the door.

Yet are they risen as He is risen;
For no eternal loss we grieve.
Blessèd are they who ask no sign,
And, never having seen, believe.

CAGED.

Alas for fame! I saw a genius sit,
Draining full bumpers with a trembling hand,
And roll out rhapsodies of folly, lit
By soaring fancies hard to understand,
Lonely he seemed, whom all men should admire;
And some were there who sneered a covert sneer,
Quenching with logic cold the sacred fire;
And one who hardly checked a rising tear

Because life's order binds with chains of steel
The struggling individual soul; because
The fair fine flower of life doth oft conceal
A hidden worm which always frets and gnaws
The inner heart from which all perfumes come,
And round the deep-set core of golden fire
Foul creeping creatures make their constant home—
Black hatred, wild revolt, and gross desire.

What is this bar that Nature loves to place
Before the too aspiring heart and brain,—
Bringing down goodly hopes to deep disgrace,
Keeping high pleasure balanced by low pain,
Pure thoughts by secret failings, subtler joys
With grosser sense or hopeless depths of woe,—
Setting our lives in barren counterpoise,
Which says, Thus far, no further shalt thou go.

Is it that Nature, envious of her own,
Even as the fabled gods of primal years,
Because to too great stature it is grown,
Hates her consummate work, and inly fears
Lest the soul, once enfranchised, soar too high,
Up to some Spiritual place of Souls,
Where the world's feeble echoes faint and die,
And in fine waves a purer æther rolls?

There is no infinite in Nature. All
Is finite, set within a self-made bound.
Thought builds round space itself a brazen wall,
And hates the barren cycle's endless round.
Life grown too perfect is not life at all;
Some hidden discords sweeten every strain;
No virtue is, where is no power to fall,
Nor true delight without a touch of pain.

And this it is that limits evermore
The life of man to this its low estate,
And gives the soul's light pinions power to soar
Only a little space toward heaven's gate.
Creatures we are of the earth, and not the sky,
Bound down, constrained, confined; and yet 'tis well:
No angel's wings are ours to mount on high,
No chains have power to keep our souls in hell.

And since to realms of thought we may aspire,
Higher than these in which we breathe and are,
And know within the same creative fire
As that which lights and warms the furthest star,
So should our restless spirits grow content
With what is theirs, nor covet to be free;
Since boundless power is oft most impotent,
And narrow bonds the truest liberty.

TOO MUCH KNOWLEDGE.

Oh, if we had but eyes to see
The glory which around us lies,
To read the secrets of the earth,
And know the splendours of the skies;

And if we had but ears to hear
The psalm of life which upward rolls
From desert tent and city street,
From every meeting-place of souls;

And if we had but tongues to tell
The dumb thoughts that shall ne'er be heard,
The inarticulate prayers which rise
From hearts by passionate yearnings stirred,—

Our souls would parch, like Semele's,
When her dread Lord blazed forth confessed.
Ah, sometimes too much knowledge blights,
And ignorance indeed is blest!

ON A FLIGHT OF LADY-BIRDS.

OVER the summer sea,
Floating on delicate wings,
Comes an unnumbered host
Of beautiful fragile things;
Whence they have come, or what
Blind impulse has forced them here,
What still voice marshalled them out
Over wide seas without fear,
You cannot tell, nor I.

But to-day the air is thick
With these strangers from far away:
On hot piers and drifting ships
The weary travellers stay.
On the sands where to-night they will drown,
On the busy waterside street,
Trampled in myriads down
By the careless wayfarers' feet
The beautiful creatures lie.

Who knows what myriads have sunk
To drown in the oily waves,
Till all our sea-side world shows
Like a graveyard crowded with graves?
Humble creatures and small,
How shall the Will which sways
This enormous unresting ball,
Through endless cycles of days,
Take thought for them or care?

And yet, if the greatest of kings,
With the wisest of sages combined,
Never could both devise—
Strong arm and inventive mind—
So wondrous a shining coat,
Such delicate wings and free,
As have these small creatures which float
Over the breathless sea
On this summer morning so fair.

* * * *

And the life, the wonderful life,
Which not all the wisdom of earth
Can give to the humblest creature that moves
The mystical process of birth—
The nameless principle which doth lurk
Far away beyond atom, or monad, or cell,
And is truly His own most marvellous work—
Was it good to give it, or, given, well
To squander it thus away?

For surely a man might think
So precious a gift and grand—
God's essence in part—should be meted out
With a thrifty and grudging hand.
And hard by, on the yellowing corn,
Myriads of tiny jaws
Are bringing the husbandman's labour to scorn,
And the cankerworm frets and gnaws,
Which was made for these for a prey.

For a prey for these? but, oh!
Who shall read us the riddle of life—
The prodigal waste, which naught can redress
But a cycle of sorrow and strife,

The continual sequence of pain,
The perpetual triumph of wrong,
The whole creation in travail to make
A victory for the strong,
And not with frail insects alone?

For is not the scheme worked out
Among us who are raised so high?
Are there no wasted minds among men—
No hearts that aspire and sigh
For the hopes which the years steal away,
For the labour they love, and its meed of fame,
And feel the bright blade grow rusted within,
Or are born to inherited shame,
And a portion with those that groan?

How are we fettered and caged
Within our dark prison-house here!
We are made to look for a loving plan;
We find everywhere sorrow and fear.
We look for the triumph of Good;
And, from all the wide world around,
The lives that are spent cry upward to heaven,
From the slaughter-house of the ground,
Till we feel that Evil is lord.

And yet are we bound to believe,
Because all our nature is so,
In a Ruler touched by an infinite ruth
For all His creatures below.
Bound, though a mocking fiend point
To the waste, and ruin, and pain—
Bound, though our souls should be bowed in despair—
Bound, though wrong triumph again and again,
And we cannot answer a word.

ON AN OLD MINSTER.

OLD minster, when my years were few,
And life seemed endless to the boy;
Clear yet and vivid is the joy
With which I gazed and thought on you.

Thin shaft and flower-wrought capital,
High-springing arch, and blazoned pane,
Quaint gurgoyles stretching heads profane,
And stately throne and carven stall.

The long nave lost in vaporous gray,
The mailed recumbent forms which wait,
In mockery of earthly state,
The coming of the dreadful day.

The haunted aisles, the gathering gloom,
By some stray shaft of eve made fair:
The stillness of the mouldering air,
The faded legends of the tomb.

I loved them all. What care had I,—
I, the young heir of all the Past,—
That neither youth nor life might last,
That all things living came to die!

The Past was spent, the Past was done,
  The Present was my own to hold;
  Far off within a haze of gold
Stretched the fair Future, scarce begun.

For me did pious builders rear
  Those reverend walls; for me the song
  Of supplication, ages long,
Had gone up daily, year by year.

And thus I loved you; but to-day
  The long Past near and nearer shows;
  Less bright, more clear, the Future grows,
And all the world is growing gray.

But you scarce bear a deeper trace
  Of time upon your solemn brow;
  No sadder, stiller, grayer now,
Than when I loved your reverend face.

And you shall be when I am not;
  And you shall be a thing of joy
  To many a frank and careless boy
When I and mine are long forgot.

Grave priests shall here with holy rage,
  Whose grandsires are as yet unborn,
  Lash, with fierce words of saintly scorn,
The heats of youth, the greed of age.

Proud prelates sit on that high throne,
  Whose young forefathers drive the plough
  While Norman lineage nods below,
In aged tramp or withered crone.

And white-haired traders feign to pray,
  Sunk deep in thoughts of gain and gold;
  And sweet flower-faces growing old,
Give place to fresher blooms than they.

With such new shape of creed and rite
  As none now living may foretell;
  A faith of love which needs not hell,
A stainless worship, pure and white.

Or, may be, some reverting change
  To the old faith of vanished days:
  The incensed air, the mystic praise,
The barbarous ritual, quaint and strange.

Who knows? But they are wrong who say
  Man's work is brief and quickly past;
  If you through all these centuries last,
While they who built you pass away.

The wind, the rain, the sand, are slow;
  Man fades before his work; scant trace
  Time's finger findeth to efface
Of him whom seventy years lay low.

The grass grows green awhile, and then
  Is as before; the work he made
  Casts on his grave a reverend shade
Through long successive lives of men.

But he! where is he? Lo, his name
  Has vanished from his wonted place,
  Unknown his tongue, his creed, his race;
Unknown his soaring hopes of fame.

Only the creatures of the brain,—
  Just laws, wise precepts, deathless verse;
  These weave a chaplet for the hearse,
And through all change unchanged remain.

These will I love as age creeps on;
Gray minster, these are ever young;
These shall be read and loved and sung
When every stone of you is gone.

No hands have built the monument
Which to all ages shall endure;—
High thoughts and fancies, sweet and pure,
Lives in the quest of goodness spent.

These, though no visible forms confine
Their spiritual essence fair;
Are deathless as the soul they bear,
And, as its Maker is, divine.

THE BITTER HARVEST.

WHO reaps the harvest of his soul,
And garners up thought's golden grain,
For him in vain life's tempests rave,
Fate's rude shocks buffet him in vain.

The storms which shipwreck feebler souls,
Beat harmlessly on him; the wind,
Which whirls away the domes of pride,
Braces the sinews of his mind.

He is set within a tower of strength,
Beyond thick walls and cloisters still;
Where, as he sits, no faintest breath
Stirs the smooth current of his will.

He is stretched in a smiling valley, where,
When hills are dark, the full sun shines;
Brings gold upon the waving fields,
And purple clusters on the vines.

He lies in a boundless sylvan shade,
While all the fields are parched around;
And hears a sweet bird, singing, singing,
With one clear monotone of sound.

Far, far away from the busy crowd
And chaffering of the mart, he stands,
Like a statue on a lonely hill,
Pondering a scroll within its hands.

Or one who, from high convent walls,
Looks down at eve upon the plain,
And sees the children at their sport,
And turns to chant and prayer again;

So rich, and yet so very poor,
So fruitful, yet so void of fruit;
Removed from human hopes and fears,
Far as the man is from the brute;

So troubled, 'neath a face of calm;
So bound with chains, though seeming free;
So dead, though with a name to live,
That it were better not to be.

OF LOVE AND SLEEP.

I SAW Sleep stand by an enchanted wood,
Thick lashes drooping o'er her heavy eyes:
Leaning against a flower-cupped tree she stood,
The night air gently breathed with slumbrous sighs.
Such cloak of silence o'er the world was spread,
As on Nile sands enshrouds the mighty dead.

About her birds were dumb, and blooms were bowed,
And a thick heavy sweetness filled the air;
White robed she seemed; and hidden as in a cloud,
A star-like jewel in her raven hair.
Downward to earth her cold torch would she turn
With feeble fires that might no longer burn.

And in her languid limbs and loosened zone
Such beauty dwelt; and in her rippling hair,
As of old time was hers, and hers alone,
The mother of gods and men divinely fair;
When whiter than white foam or sand she lay,
The fairest thing beneath the eye of day.

To her came Love, a comely youth and strong,
Fair as the morning of a day in June;
Around him breathed a jocund air of song,
And his limbs moved as to a joyous tune:
With golden locks blown back, and eyes aflame,
To where the sleeping maiden leant, he came.

Then they twain passed within that mystic grove
Together, and with them I, myself unseen.

Oh, strange, sweet land! wherein all men may prove
The things they would, the things which might have been;
Hopeless hopes blossom, withered youth revives,
And sunshine comes again to darkened lives.

What sights were theirs in that blest wonder-land?
See, the white mountain-summits, framed in cloud,
Redden with sunset; while below them stand
The solemn pine-woods like a funeral crowd;
And lower still the vineyards twine, and make
A double vintage in the tranquil lake.

Or, after storm-tost nights, on some sea isle
The sudden tropical morning bursts; and lo!
Bright birds and feathery palms, the green hills smile,
Strange barks, with swarthy crews, dart to and fro;
And on the blue bay, glittering like a crown,
The white domes of some fair historic town.

Or, they fare northward ever, northward still,
At midnight, under the unsetting sun;
O'er endless snows, from hill to icy hill,
Where silence reigns with death, and life is done:

Till from the North a sweet wind suddenly;
And hark! the warm waves of the fabulous sea.

Or, some still eve, when summer days are long,
And the mown hay is sweet, and wheat is green,
They hear some wood-bird sing the old fair song
Of joys to be, greater than yet have been;
Stretched 'neath the snowy hawthorn, till the star,
Hung high in heaven, warns them that home is far.

Or, on the herbless, sun-struck hills, by night,
Under the silent peaks, they hear the loud
Wild flutes; and onward, by the ghostly light,
Whirled in nude dances, sweeps the maddened crowd;
Till the fierce eddy seize them, and they prove
The shame, the rapture, of unfettered love.

Or, by the sacred hearth they seem to sit,
While firelight gleams on many a sunny head;
At that fair hour, before the lamp is lit,
When hearts are fullest, though no word be said,—.
When the world fades, and rank and wealth and fame,
Seem, matched with this, no better than a name.

All these they knew! and then a breeze of day
Stirred the dark wood; and then they seemed to come
Forth with reluctant feet among the gray,
Bare fields, unfanciful; and all the flame
Was burnt from out Love's eyes, and from his hair,
And his smooth cheek was marked with lines of care.

And paler showed the maid, more pure and white
And holier than before. But when I said,
"Sweet eyes, be opened;" lo, the unveiled sight
Was as the awful vision of the dead!
Then knew I, breathing slow, with difficult breath,
That Love was one with Life, and Sleep with Death.

BLIND.

THE girl who from her father's door
Sees the cold storm-cloud sweep the sea,
Cries, wrestling with her anguish sore,
My love! my love! ah, where is he?
And locks her fears within her breast,
Sickening; while 'neath the breathless blaze
He lies, and dreams, in broken rest,
Of homely faces,—happier days.

But when a calm is on the deep,
And scarcely from the quivering blue,
The waves' soft murmur, half asleep,
Speaks hope that he is well, and true:

The brave ship sinks to rise no more
Beneath the thunderous surge; and he,
A pale corpse floating on the sea,
Or dashed like seaweed on the shore.

TO HER PICTURE.

As one who on a lonely bed of pain
Feels the soft hand he felt when he was young;
Or, who at eve, on some far Eastern plain,
Hears the old songs once by his mother sung:
So to me, looking on thy portrait, dear,
Thou and my youth and love are ever near.

It may be that the painter failed to show,
How should he not? the soul within thine eyes,—
Their blue unruffled depths, thy cheeks aglow
With virgin blushes that unbidden rise;
Thy coral lips, thy white neck, round, and fair,
Or the sweet prodigal auburn of thy hair.

How should he? Not for him thou wast, but me;
Love shot no sudden splendour in his eyes;
Love guided not his hand, content to see
Mere beauty, as of sunset-hills or skies;
Nor soothed his dull ear with the mystic strain,
Heard once a life, and nevermore again.

Only the lovely shell he saw; the cloak,
The perfect vesture of the hidden soul.
Not for his eyes thy slumbering angel woke,
Stretched in deep sleep, where love's broad waters roll:
Had he but seen her wings of silver move,
He had forgot to paint, and learned to love.

Yet is his skill to me for ever blest,
For that which it has left of grace and truth;
Those sweet eyes shine, yet need no time of rest,
Still thy fair cheek retains its rounded youth.
In wakeful nights I light my lamp, and know
The same dear face I knew long years ago.

Yet worn am I, too old for love, and gray.
Too faithful heart, thou shouldst not still abide
With such as I, nor longer deign to stay:
These are the follies wiser worldlings chide.
Thou wouldst transfer those glances, wert thou wise,
To younger lives and more responsive eyes.

Ah! no, remain; not thus you looked of yore;
Another, perhaps more worthy, bore the prize;
I could not tell you then the love I bore,
Or read the soft requital in your eyes;

Now no change comes, now thou art always kind,
Then thou wast cold and changeful as the wind.

THE RETURN.

He stood above the well-known shore;
Behind, the sea stretched dull and gray:
And slowly with the breeze of morn
The great ship forged away.

Almost he wished she might return,
And speed him to some further change;
The old scenes greeted him again,
And yet all things were strange.

There were the dreams he used to dream
In the long nights when day was here;
The shady Sunday path to church,
The winding brooklet clear.

The woods with violets blue in Spring,
The fallow where they chased the hare,
The gable peeping through the elms,
All filled him with despair.

For all was there except the past—
The past, his youth for dross had sold!
The past which after-years in vain
Prize more than all their gold.

Then age fell on him with a flash,
Time smote him, and his soul grew gray,
And thoughts in busier scenes unknown,
Chased youth and hope away.

The past, which seemed so near before,
A step might gain it, came to be
A low cloud sunk beyond a gulf,
Wider than any sea.

Nor what the present had in store,
Knowing; at last his great suspense
Grew to a bitter load of pain,
Too great for mortal sense.

So, by the well-known paths at last,
He gained the well-remembered door,
Sick for a voice which he should hear,
Ah! never, never, more

Strange children round, a stranger's face
Of wonder, so the dream was o'er.
He turned; the dead past comes not back.
No, never, never, more.

FOR EVER.

For ever and for ever
The changeless oceans roar:
And dash their thundering surges down
Upon the sounding shore:
Yet this swift soul, this lightning will,
Shall these, while they roll on, be still?

For ever and for ever
The eternal mountains rise,
And lift their virgin snows on high
To meet the silent skies.
Yet shall this soul which measures all,
While these stand steadfast, sink and fall?

For ever and for ever
The swift suns roll through space;
From age to age they wax and wane,
Each in its ordered place:

Yet shall this soul, whose inner eye
Foretells their cycles, fade and die?

For ever and for ever
We have been, and we are,
Unchanging as the ocean wave,
Unresting as the star:
Though suns stand still, and time be o'er,
We are, and shall be, evermore.

BEHIND THE VEIL.

I PACED along
The dim cathedral wrapped in reverend gloom:
I heard the sweet child's song
Spring upwards like a fountain; and the boom
Of the tempestuous organ-music swell;
The hushed low voices and the silvery bell;
The incense-laden air; the kneeling throng:
I knew them all, and seemed to hear the cry
Of countless myriads, rising deep and strong,—
Help us! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine!

I heard the loud
Muezzin from the slender minaret call
"To prayer, To prayer;" and lo! the busy crowd,
Merchant and prince and water-carrier, all
Turned from the world, and, rapt in worship, knelt,
Facing the holy city; and I felt
That from those myriads kneeling, prostrate, bowed,
A low moan rises to the throne on high,—
Not shut out quite by error's thickest cloud,—
Help us! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine.

I stood before
The glaring temples on the burning plain;
I heard the hideous roar
Rise to the stars to drown the shrieks of pain,
What time the murderous idol swept along.
I listened to the innocent, mystic song,
Breathed to the jewelled Lotus evermore,
In the elder lands, through the ages, like a sigh,
And heard in low, sweet chant, and hateful roar,—
Help us! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine!

Ay: everywhere
Echoes the same exceeding bitter cry.
Yet can the Father bear
To hide His presence from the children's eye;
Lets loose on good and bad the plague and sword;
And though wrong triumph, answers not a word?
Only deep down in the heart doth He declare

His constant presence; there, though the outward sky
Be darkened, shines a little speck of fair,—
A light which cannot die.
Though knees be weak, and eyes be blind;
Though we may seek, and never find;
Here doth His hidden glory shine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine!

VISIONS.

Oft in the blazing summer noon,
And oft beneath the frosty moon,
When earth and air were hushed and still,
And absolute silence seemed to fill
The farthest border-lands of space,
I loved in childish thought to trace
Glimpses of change, which might transform
The voiceless calm to furious storm;
Broke the dull spell, which comes to bind
In after-years the sluggish mind;
And pictured, borne on fancy's wings,
The end of all created things.

Then have I seen with dreaming eye,
The blue depths of the vaulted sky
Rent without noise; and in their stead
A wonder-world of fancy spread,
A golden city, with domes and spires,
Lit by a strange sun's mystic fires.
Portals of dazzling chrysolite,
Long colonnades of purest white;
Streets paved with gold and jewels rare;
And higher, in the ambient air,
A shining Presence undefined:
Swift seraphs stooping swift as wind
From pole to pole, and that vast throng
Which peopled Dante's world of song;
The last great inquest which shall close
The tale of human joys and woes;
The dreadful Judge, the opening tomb,
And all the mystery of doom.
Then woke to find the vision vain,
And sun or moon shine calm again.

No longer, save in memory's glass,
These vanished visions come and pass;
The clearer light of fuller day
Has chased these earlier dreams away.
Faith's eye grows dim with too much light,
And fancy flies our clearer sight.
But shall we mourn her day is o'er,
That these rapt visions come no more?
Nay; knowledge has its splendours too,
Brighter than Fancy's brightest hue.
I gaze now on the heavens, and see
How, midst their vast immensity,
By cosmic laws the planets roll,
Sped onwards by a central soul;
How farther still, and still more far,
World beyond world, star beyond star,
So many, and so far, that speech
And thought must fail the sum to reach.
This universe of nature teems
With things more strange than fancy's dreams;
And so at length, with clearer eye,
Soar beyond childhood's painted sky,
Up to the Lord of great and small,
Not onewhere, but pervading all:
Who made the music of the spheres,
And yet inclines an ear that hears
The faintest prayer, the humblest sigh,
The strong man's groan, the childish cry;
Who guides the stars, yet without whom
No humblest floweret comes to bloom,
No lowliest creature comes to birth,
No dead leaf flutters to the earth:

Who breathed into our souls the breath,
Which neither time nor change nor death,
Nor hurtling suns at random hurled
And dashed together, world on world,
Can ever kill or quench, till He
Bends down, and bids them not to be.

DOUBT.

WHO but has seen
Once in his life, when youth and health ran high,
The fair, clear face of truth
Grow dark to his eye?
Who but has known
Cold mists of doubt and icy questionings
Creep round him like a nightmare, blotting out
The sight of better things.

A hopeless hour,
When all the voices of the soul are dumb,
When o'er the tossing seas
No ligh may come,
When God and right
Are gone, and seated on the empty throne
Are dull philosophies and words of wind,
Making His praise their own.

Better than this,
The burning sins of youth, the old man's greed,
Than thus to live inane;
To sit and read,
And with blind brain
Daily to treasure up a deadly doubt,
And live a life from which the light has fled,
And faith's pure fire gone out.

Until at last,
For some blest souls, but never here for all,
Burns out a sudden light,
And breaks the thrall,
And doubt has fled,
And the soul rises, with a clearer sight
For this its pain, its sorrow, its despair,
To God and truth and right.

Plead we for those
Gently and humbly, as befitteth men
On whom the same chill shade
Broods now as then.
So shall they learn
How an eternal wisdom rules above,
And all the cords of Being are bound fast
To an unfailing love.

ST. DAVID'S HEAD.

SALT sprays deluge it, wild waves buffet it, hurricanes rave;
Summer and winter, the depths of the ocean girdle it round;
In leaden dawns, in golden noon-tides, in silvery moonlight
Never it ceases to hear the old sea's mystical sound.
Surges vex it evermore
By gray cave and sounding shore.

Think of the numberless far-away centuries, long before man,
When the hot earth with monsters teemed, and with monsters the deep,
And the red sun loomed faint, and the moon was caught fast in the motionless air,
And the warm waves seethed through the haze in a secular sleep.
Rock was here and headland then,
Ere the little lives of men.

Over it long the mastodons crashed through the tropical forest,
And the great bats swooped overhead through the half-defined blue;
Then they passed, and the hideous ape-man, speechless and half-erect,
Through weary ages of time tore and gibbered and slew.
Grayer skies and chiller air,
But the self-same rock was there.

Then the savage came and went, and Briton and Roman and Saxon,
Till our England grew rich and great, and her white sails covered the sea;
Thus through all this long story of ours, civil progress and vanquished foeman,
From Crecy to Trafalgar, from the bondsman down to the free,
Still those dark rocks, and beneath
Keeps the sea its face of death.

So it shall be when the tide of our greatness has ebbed to the shallows;
So when there floats not a ship on this storm-tossed westerly main,
Hard by, the minster crumbles, the city has shrunk to a village;
Thus shall we shrink one day, and our forests be pathless again;
And the headland stern shall stand,
Guarding an undiscovered land.

Vex it, O changeless ocean; rave round it, tempests unceasing;
Sink it, great earthquakes, deep in the depths of the fathomless sea;
Burn them, fierce fires of the centre, burn rock and ocean together,
Till the red globe flare throughout space, through the ages to be.
Cease, make an end, dull world, begone·
How shall I cease while you roll on?

Time, oh, horrible! Space, oh, terrible! Infinite Void!
Dreadful abysses of Being! blighting a finite brain;
How shall the creatures of thought subsist, when the thinker ceases?
Begone, dull figments, be done! not alone shall you dare to remain.
Without me you yourselves must fall;
I hold the measure of you all.

IN VOLHYNIA.

In Volhynia the peasant mothers,
When spring-time brings back the leaves,
And the first swallows dart and twitter
Under the cottage eaves,—

Sit mute at their windows, and listen,
With eyes brimming over with tears,
To the broken sounds which are wafted
To their eager watching ears.

And throw out bread and honey
To the birds as they scintillate by;
And hearts full of yearning and longing,
Borne out on the wings of a sigh.

For they think that their dear lost children,
The little ones who are gone,
Come back thus to the heartsick mothers
Who are toiling and sorrowing on.

And those sun-lit wings and flashing
White breasts, to their tear-dimmed eyes
Bring visions of white child-angels
Floating in Paradise.

And again to the sounds they hearken,
Which grew silent while incomplete,
The music of childish laughter,
The patter of baby feet.

Till the hearts which are barren and childless,
The homes which are empty and cold:
The nests whence the young have departed,
Are filled with young life as of old.

Thus each spring, to those peasant mothers,
Comes the old Past again and again;
And those sad hearts quicken and blossom,
In a rapture of sorrowless pain.

THE LIVING PAST.

O faithful souls that watch and yearn,
Expectant of the coming light,
With kindling hearts and eyes that burn
With hope to see the rule of right;

The time of peace and of good will,
When the thick clouds of wrong and pain
Roll up as from a shining hill,
And never more descend again;

The perfect day, the golden year,
The end of sorrow and of sighs;
Whether the heavenly change be here,
Or far beyond the sunset skies,—

I cherish you, I love your faith,
I long with you that this may be;
But hark, a dreary voice which saith,
"Vain dreamer, what were it to thee!"

For though the blest hour strike before
Another sunrise vex the earth,
And pain and evil rule no more,
But vanish in the newer birth,—

Though war and hatred come to cease,
And sorrow be no more, nor sin,
And in their stead an endless peace
Its fair unbroken reign begin,—

What comfort have ye? What shall blot
The memories of bitter years,

Of joys which have been, but are not,
And floods of unforgotten tears?

The painful records graven clear
On carven rock or deathless page;
The long unceasing reign of fear,
The weary tale of lust and rage;

The ills whose dark sum baffles thought,
Done day by day beneath the sun?
"That which is done," the old sage taught,
"Not God Himself can make undone."

For that which has been, still must live,
And 'neath the shallow Present last.
Oh, who will sweet oblivion give,
Who free us from the dreadful Past?

CHANGES.

You see that tall house opposite?
Three times within the fleeting year,
Since last the summer-time was here,
Great changes have gone over it.

For first a bridal bright and gay
Filled the long street with riotous sound;
And amid smiles from all around,
The newly-wedded passed away.

And when the violets came once more,
And lambs were born, a concourse went,
Still gayer, still more innocent,
To christening from that stately door.

And now the mute house dull and drear,
From blinded eyes, stares blank and white;
And amid dust and glaring light,
The black lines slowly disappear.

ALONE.

What shall it profit a man
To have stood by the source of things,
To have spent the fair years of his youthful prime
In mystical questionings;
To have scaled the lovely height,
While his brothers slept below;
To have seen the vision bright
Which but few on earth may know,—
If when his task be done
He lives his life alone?
If in the busy street
None come whom he may greet?
If in his lonely room
With the night the shadows deepen into ghostly shapes of gloom?

It may be his soul may say,
"I have gained me a splendid dower;
I can look around on the toiling crowd,
With the pride of a conscious power.
I can hear the passer-by
Tell of all my world-wide fame;
I have friends I shall not see
Who dwell fondly on my name.
If the sweet smile of wife
Light not my joyless life,
If to my silent home
No childish laughter come,
Shall I no solace find
In communion with the monarchs of the fair broad realm of mind?"

But when sickness wears him, or age
Creeps on, and his soul doth yearn
For the tender hand and the soothing voice

That shall never more return
When the lessening throng of friends,
Not unkind, but each one set
Safe within white walls of home,
All the world without forget,—
Shall not old memories rise
'Twixt book and weary eyes,
Till knowledge come to seem
A profitless vague dream?
Shall not he sometimes sigh
For the careless past unlearnèd, and the happy days gone by?

Ah! not to be happy alone,
Are men sent, or to be glad.
Oft-times the sweetest music is made
By the voices of the sad.
The thinker oft is bent
By a too-great load of thought;
The discoverer's soul grows sick
With the secret vainly sought:
Lonely may be the home,
No breath of fame may come,
Yet through their lives doth shine
A purple light Divine,
And a nobler pain they prove
Than the bloom of lower pleasures, or the fleeting spell of love.

SEA VOICES.

PEACE, moaning Sea; what tale have you to tell?
What mystic tidings, all unknown before?
Whether you break in thunder on the shore,
Or whisper like the voice within the shell,
O moaning Sea, I know your burden well.

'Tis but the old dull tale, filled full of pain;
The finger on the dial-plate of time,
Advancing slow with pitiless beat sublime,
As stoops the day upon the fading plain;
And that has been which may not be again.

The voice of yearning, deep but scarce expressed,
For something which is not, but may be yet;
Too full of sad continuance to forget,
Too troubled with desires to be at rest,
Too self-conflicting ever to be blest.

The voice of hopes and aspirations high,
Swallowed in sand, or shivered on the rock;
Tumultuous life dashed down with sudden shock;
And passionate protests, narrowed to a sigh,
From hearts too weak to live,—too strong to die.

The voice of old beliefs which long have fled,
Gone with a shriek, and leaving naught behind,
But some vague utterance, cold as wintry wind,—
Some dim remembrance of a ghostly dread
Which lingers still when faith itself is dead.

And, above all, through thund'rous wintry roar,
And summer ripple, this, and this alone,

For ever do I make this barren moan:—
No end, there is no end,—on Time's dull shore
I wail, I beat, I thunder, evermore.

BERLIN, 1871.

THE spring day was all of a flutter with flags;
The mad chimes were beating like surf in the air;
The beggars had slunk out of sight with their rags;
And the balconies teemed with the rich and the fair.

And below, on each side, the long vistas were set
In a frame-work of faces, patient and white,—
Wives, mothers, sweethearts, with full eyes wet,
And sick hearts longing to see the sight.

Till at length, when the evening was waning, there ran
A stir through the crowd, and far-off, like a flame,
The setting sun burned on the helms of the van,
And with trampling of hoofs the proud conquerors came.

And with every step they advanced, you might hear
Women's voices, half-maddened with long-deferred joy:
"Thank God! he is safe. See, my love, we are here!
See! here am I, darling; and this is our boy!"
Or, "Here am I, dearest, still faithful and true;
Your own love as of old!" Or an agonised cry,
As the loved face came not with the comrades she knew
And the rough soldiers found not a word to reply.

And pitiful hands led her softly away,
With a loving heart rent and broken in twain;
And the triumph sweeps onward, in gallant array,—
The life and the hope, the despair and the pain.

Where was it? In Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome?
Ages since, or to-day; in the old world, or new?
Who shall tell? From all time these strange histories come;
And to-day, as of old, the same story is true.

And the long line sweeps past, and the dull world rolls on
Though the rapture is dead and the sad tears are dry,
And careless of all, till the progress be done,
Life rides like a conqueror triumphing by.

THE BEACON.

FAIR shines the beacon from its lonely rock,
Stable alone amid the unstable waves:

In vain the surge leaps with continual shock,
In vain around the wintry tempest raves,
And ocean thunders in her sounding caves.

For here is life within the gate of death,
Calm light and warmth amid the storm without;
Here sleeping love breathes with untroubled breath,
And faith, clear-eyed, pierces the clouds of doubt
And monstrous depths which compass her about.

So calm, so pure, yet prisoned and confined;
Fenced by white walls from pleasure as from pain.
Not always glooms the sea or shrieks the wind:
Sometimes light zephyrs curl the azure main,
And the sweet sea-nymphs glide with all their train.

Or Aphrodite rises from the foam,
And lies all rosy on the golden sand,
And o'er the purple plains the Nereids roam;
Sweet laughter comes, borne from the joyous band,
And faint sweet odours from the far-off land.

And straightway the impatient soul within
Loathes its white house which to a jail doth turn;
Careless of true or false, of right or sin,
Careless of praying hands or eyes that burn,
Or aught that sense can feel or mind discern.

Knowing but this,—that the unknown is blest,
Holding delight of free untrammelled air:
Delight of toil sweeter than any rest,
Fierce storms with cores of calm for those who dare
Black rayless nights than fairest noons more fair.

And drifting forth at eve in some frail boat,
Beholds the old light, like a setting star,
Sink in the sea, and still doth fare and float
Adown the night till day-break shows afar,—
And hark the faint low thunders of the bar.

Nor if indeed he reach the Blessèd Isle,
Nor if those pitiless crests shall plunge him down,
Knows he; but whether breathless azure smile,
Or furious night and horrible tempests frown,
Living or dying, Freedom wears a crown.

THE GARDEN OF REGRET.

BEYOND the dim walls of the shadowy Past,
A sweet vague host of fancies flourishes,

Like garden seeds in some rough hollow cast,
Which all unasked the kind earth nourishes,
And sends up tender blooms more sweet and fair
Than the dull Present rears with all its care.

There on its thin stem hangs the frail white flower;
Far sweeter now she shines within the shade,
Than when of old within the trim-kept bower
And perfumed lush parterres her home she made;
Because her sister blooms are past and gone,
And this alone it is that lingers on.

The same white flower,—but oh, the depths of change!
Before, the creamy petals, broad and strong,
Were all adust with gold, and filled with strange
Sweet scents, which lurked the odorous depths among;
Deep in her honeyed wells, the bee would stay
Content, and birds sing round the live-long day.

The same white flower—yet changed in scent and hue.
Now the fair feeble petals curl and shrink;
The dead smooth surfaces are veined with blue;
No honeyed draughts they hold for bee to drink,
Nor busy hum, nor joyous song is heard.
What hath she left to charm or bee or bird?

Only a faint sweet odour lingers yet,
Dearer than those rich scents of former years:
A fragile fairness, fairer through regret,
And watered by the dewy fount of tears.
To me that outcast flower is dearer grown,
Than when in those fair gardens over-blown.

I set her in the garden of my heart,
And water her from life's sincerest spring;
And lo! once more the frail stems quicken and start,
Fair honeyed blooms arise and blithe birds sing:
The old sweet flower in scent and gorgeous hue,
But not the tender grace that once I knew.

Alas! not in the Present will she grow:
The Present has its own blooms sweet and bright;
Within its four walls life's fair pleasures blow,
And each gay season brings its own delight:
Far off in dewy shades the exile sweet
Grows fair, and paths untrodden by living feet.

There let her stay. I know not if my theme
Be love, or some fair child of heart or mind:

Young friendships, hopes, beliefs, which like a dream
Pass from us leaving some sweet ghost behind.

Leave them behind, they have been; others are,
And shall be. Lo! the spring time is not far.

SECOND SERIES (1874).

*TO AN UNKNOWN POET.**

DEAR friend, who, two long centuries ago,
Didst tread where since my grandsires trod,
Along thy devious Usk's untroubled flow,
Breathing thy soul to God.

I seek, I, born in these our later days,
Using the measure thou didst love,
With halting tribute of too tardy praise,
A poet throned above.

I in the self-same venerable halls
And gray quadrangles made my home,
Which heard, new-built, within their recent walls,
Thy youthful footsteps come.

A little grayer now and stiller grown,
The tranquil refuge now, as then,
Where our dear country glories in her own,
Apart from alien men.

There, on thy musings broke the painful sound
Of arms; the long-plumed cavaliers
Clanged thro' the courts—the low fat fields around
Were filled with strife and tears.

Constrained by promptings of thy ancient race,
Thy gown and books thou flungst away,
To meet the sturdy Roundhead face to face
On many a hard-fought day,

Till thy soft soul grew sick, and thou didst turn
To our old hills; and there, ere long,
Love for thy Amoret, at times, would burn
In some too fervid song.

But soon thy wilder pulses stayed, and, life
Grown equable, thy sweet muse mild,
Sobered by tranquil love of child and wife,
Flowed pure and undefiled.

A humble healer thro' a life obscure,
Thou didst expend thy homely days;
Sweet Swan of Usk! few know how clear and pure
Are thy unheeded lays.

One poet shall become a household name
Into the nation's heart ingrown;
One more than equal miss the meed of fame,
And live and die unknown.

* Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, died near Brecon, 1695.

So thou, surviving in thy lonely age,
All but thy own undying love
Didst pour upon the sympathetic page,
Words which all hearts can move—

So quaintly fashioned as to add a grace
To the sweet fancies which they bear,
Even as a bronze delved from some ancient place
For very rust shows fair.

"They all are gone into the world of light!"
It is thy widowed muse that sings,
And then mounts upward from our dazzled sight
On heavenward soaring wings.

"He that hath found some fledged bird's nest may know"
"At first sight if the bird be flown;"
"But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,"
"That is to him unknown."

"And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams"
"Call to the soul when man doth sleep,"
"So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,"
"And into glory peep."

"O father of eternal life and all
"Created glories under Thee!"
"Resume Thy Spirit from this world of thrall"
"Into true liberty."

* * * *

Thou hast rejoined thy dear ones now, and art,
Dear soul, as then thou wouldst be, free.

I, still a prisoner, strive to do my part
In memory of thee.

Thou art so high, and yet unknown: shall I
Repine that I too am obscure?
Nay, what care I, though all my verse shall die,
If only it is pure?

So some new singer of the days to be,
Reading this page with soft young eyes,
Shall note the tribute which I pay to thee
With youth's sweet frank surprise.

And musing in himself, perchance shall say,
"Two bards whom centuries part are here—
One whose high fame and name defy decay,
And one who held him dear."

COMFORT.

THO' love be bought and honour sold,
The sunset keeps its glow of gold,
And round the rosy summits cold
The white clouds hover, fold on fold.

Tho' over-ripe the nations rot,
Tho' right be dead and faith forgot,
Tho' one dull cloud the heavens may blot,
The tender leaf delayeth not.

Tho' all the world lie sunk in ill,
The bounteous autumns mellow still,
By virgin sand and sea-worn hill
The constant waters ebb and fill.

From out the throng and stress of lies,
From out the painful noise of sighs,
One voice of comfort seems to rise:
"It is the meaner part that dies."

SONG.

If ever, dear,
I might at last the barren victory gain,
After long struggle and laborious pain,
And many a secret tear,
To think, since think I must of thee,
Not otherwise than thou of me.

Haply I might
Thy chilling coldness, thy disdain, thy pride,
Which draw me, half reluctant, to thy side,
With a like meed requite,
And I my too fond self despise,
Seeing with disenchanted eyes.

But now, alas!
So fast a prisoner am I to my love,
No power there is that can my chains remove,
So sweet the caged hours pass,
That, if it parted me from thee,
I would not willingly grow free.

Nor would I dare
To ask for recompense of love again,
Who love thee for the height of thy disdain.
Thou wouldst not show so fair
If we should own an equal flame,
Unequal souls, in love the same.

Full well I know
That what I worship is not wholly thee,
But a fair dream, a pious fantasy.
Such as at times doth grow
On yearnings of the cloistered mind,
Or the rapt vision of the blind.

Scorn me then, sweet,
I would not thou shouldst leave thy lofty place,
Thy lover should not see thee face to face,
But prostrate at thy feet.
No recompense, no equal part I seek,
Only that thou be strong and I be weak.

OH, SNOWS SO PURE!

Oh, snows so pure! oh, peaks so high!
I lift to you a hopeless eye.

I see your icy ramparts drawn
Between the sleepers and the dawn.

I see you, when the sun has set,
Flush with the dying daylight yet.

I see you, passionless and pure,
Above the lightnings stand secure;

But may not climb, for now the hours
Are spring's, and earth a maze of flowers.

And now, 'mid summer's dust and heat,
I stay my steps for childish feet.

And now, when autumn glows, I fear
To lose the harvest of the year.

Now winter frowns, and life runs slow,
Even on the plains I tread thro' snow.

While you are veiled, or, dimly seen,
Only reveal what might have been;

And where high hope would once aspire
Broods a vast storm-cloud dealing fire.

Oh, snows so pure! oh, peaks so high!
I shall not reach you till I die!

THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH.

ALL travail of high thought,
All secrets vainly sought,
All struggles for right, heroic, perpetually fought.

Faint gleams of purer fire,
Conquests of gross desire,
Whereby the fettered soul ascends continually higher.

Sweet cares for love or friend
Which ever heavenward tend,
Too deep and true and tender to have on earth their end.

Vile hearts malign and fell,
Lives which no tongue may tell,
So dark and dread and shameful that they breathe a present hell.

White mountain, deep-set lake,
Sea wastes which surge and break,
Fierce storms which, roaring from the north, the midnight forests shake.

Fair morns of summer days,
Rich harvest eves that raise
The soul and heart o'erburdened to an ecstasy of praise.

Low whispers, vague and strange,
Which through our being range,
Breathing perpetual presage of some mighty coming change.

These in the soul do breed
Thoughts which, at last, shall lead
To some clear, firm assurance of a satisfying creed.

A MEMORY.

DOWN dropped the sun upon the sea,
The gradual darkness filled the land.
And 'mid the twilight, silently,
I felt the pressure of a hand.

And a low voice: "Have courage, friend.
Be of good cheer, 'tis not for long;
He conquers who awaits the end,
And dares to suffer and be strong."

I have seen many a land since then,
Known many a joy and many a pain.
Victor in many a strife of men,
Vanquished again and yet again.

The ancient sorrow now is not,
Since time can heal the keenest smart;
Yet the vague memory, scarce forgot,
Lingers deep down within the heart.

Still, when the ruddy flame of gold
Fades into gray on sea and land,
I hear the low sweet voice of old,
I feel the pressure of a hand.

THE NEW ORDER.

THE old lives are dead and gone and rotten,
The old thoughts shall never more be thought,
The old faiths have failed and are forgotten,
The old strifes are done, the fight is fought.

And with a clang and roll, the new creation
Bursts forth 'mid tears and blood and tribulation.

Sweet they were, the old days that are ended,
The golden years, the happy careless hours
Then, like Pagan gods on the asphodel extended,
Dreaming, men wove them fancies fair as flowers.
Love laid near them, Art to cheer them, youthful Beauty
Sitting crowned upon the marble throne of Duty.

All good things were theirs to cherish —lives grown finer
From the heritage of long ancestral ease,
And a nobler port, and temperate mien diviner
Than their labours and their vigils leave to these;
Gentler voices, smiles more gracious, and the fashion
Of their soft lives tuned to pity and compassion.

Naught men knew of science, now grown rigid
With its teaching of inexpiable sin;
Nor the dull pedantic gospel, dead and frigid,
Of a heaven where mind alone may enter in,
Doom awaiting, stern and silent, all transgression,
And no saint with power to make an intercession.

For a Ruler, as men thought they saw above them,
More than earthly rulers, pitiful and mild,
A Father with a stronger love to love them
Than the love an earthly father bears his child—
God above them, and for pleader and defender
Christ's face stooping, like his mother's, true and tender.

But now there seems no place for the Creator
To hold his long unbroken chain of law,
Nor any need for heaven-sent Mediator,
Nor the Providence our fathers thought they saw.
Only a dull world-system, always tending
To a blind goal, by a blind rule unbending.

And for the courtesy and tender graces,
The chivalries and charities of old,
A dull and equal arrogance effaces
Soft sympathies by hard demands and cold;
And the giver giveth not, lest any blame him,
And the taker may not take, lest taking shame him.

Be still, oh ye of little faith, repining
That the purpose of the Eternal will is dead.
The silent stars forget not yet their shining,
Daily the full sun journeys overhead.

How shall mind's realm alone forget
its reason,
When the sure years roll season after
season?

There shall rise from this confusèd
sound of voices
A firmer faith than that our fathers
knew,
A deep religion, which alone rejoices
In worship of the Infinitely True,
Not built on rite or portent, but a finer
And purer reverence for a Lord diviner.

There shall come from out this noise of
strife and groaning
A broader and a juster brotherhood,
A deep equality of aim, postponing
All selfish seeking to the general good.
There shall come a time when each
shall to another
Be as Christ would have him—brother
unto brother.

There shall come a time when know-
ledge wide extended,
Sinks each man's pleasure in the
general health,
And all shall hold irrevocably blended
The individual and the common-
wealth,
When man and woman in an equal union
Shall merge, and marriage be a true
communion.

There shall come a time when brother-
hood shows stronger
Than the narrow bounds which now
distract the world;
When the cannons roar and trumpets
blare no longer,
And the ironclad rusts, and battle
flags are furled;

When the bars of creed and speech and
race, which sever,
Shall be fused in one humanity for ever.

Oh, glorious end! oh, blessed consum-
mation!
Oh, precious day! for which we wait
and yearn.
Thou shalt come, and knit men nation
unto nation.
But not for us, who watch to day
and burn,
Thou shalt come, but after what long
years of trial,
Weary watchings, baffled longings, dull
denial!

AT MIDNIGHT.

THEY were two poor young girls, little
older than children,
Who passed through the midnight
streets of the city
Singing.

Poorly clad, morning-eyed, with a
strange look of shyness,
Linked arms, and round cheeks, and
smooth heads bent together,
Singing.

Singing, great Heaven! with their
fresh childish voices,
Some low-murmured ditty, half hymn-
tune, half love-song,
Singing,

Always by hushed square, and long
street deserted,
As from school by the old village street
on fair evenings,
Singing,

Singing, and knowing it not, the old burden
That is born out of secular wrongs and oppressions,
Singing,

Of selfish riches, of misery and hunger,
Of sin that is bred of the wants of the wretched,
Singing,

Of poor bribes that purchase souls, of the endless,
Perpetual harvest of pain and of evil,
Singing,

So, they passed to the flaring sin-befouled places,
And amid the thick throng of the fallen I lost them,
Singing,

A hymn-tune, a love-song, a prayer chanted backward,
A witch spell unholy, a sweet suffrage saintly
Singing.

NEMESIS.

WHO, without fear
Piercing the inmost deeps of silent thought,
Has won the prize with lonely labour sought,
And many a bitter tear,
He in his breast doth hold
A rarer thing than gold,
And a fair treasure greater than in words is told.

For he shall learn,
Not from another's lore, but his own soul,
Whither life's hidden ocean currents roll,
And with sure helm shall turn
Into a haven fair,
Where, on the breathless air,
Nor wave nor storm shall break, but peace is everywhere.

There, in light boat
Laid on the soft breast of the summer sea,
Lapt day by day in great tranquillity,
He carelessly shall float.
He scarce shall see or hear
A sight or sound of fear,
Only a low-voiced siren always gliding near.

Without the bar
The enormous surges leap from sea to sky.
Upon the ghostly inland summits high
The avalanche thunders far.
On the dull plains below,
In long successions slow
The toiling generations sow, and reap, and sow.

Dream-like, he sees
The lurid smoke blot the beleaguered town,
Or the great earthquake shake the city down;
Labours and miseries;
Fire takes them—famine, flood,
And fever's hideous brood.
By night the black skies redden with a glare like blood.

For him, meanwhile,
Laid in the shelter of his silken sail,
Tho' wind and storm on sea and land prevail,
The enchanted waters smile.
Always in that calm deep,
Wherein life's currents sleep,
He sees high heaven reflected, tho' all men may weep.

Yet now and then
Between the stars and him, deep, sunk below,
He starts to see a strange dead semblance grow,
Gone from the eyes of men.
Some thin and pale-eyed ghost,
By marred reflections crost,
Of thoughts, and faiths, and yearnings long since lost.

And if these fade
Betimes, he slowly gains to peace again;
But if too long they tarry, such a pain
Those clear depths doth invade,
That for sheer terror he,
And utter misery,
Flies to the storm-wrapt hills and hungry calling sea.

TO A CHILD OF FANCY.

My little dove, my little lamb,
In whom again a child I am;
My innocent, on whose fair head
The glories of the unknown are shed;

Who thro' the laughing summer day
Spendest the rosy hours in play,
Too much by joyous life possest
To give a willing thought to rest;

Who, with the earliest shades of night,
White-robed, in happy slumbers light,
Recallest in thy stainless calm
An angel resting from its psalm;

Whence art thou come? What power could teach
The secret of thy broken speech?
What agile limb, what stalwart arm,
Like thy sweet feebleness can charm?

With what a rapture of surprise
This fair world meets thy steadfast eyes,
As if they saw reflected there
Faint images of scenes more fair.

Leaving another heaven behind,
A heaven on earth thou cam'st to find;
This world, so full of misery,
Opens celestial gates for thee.

Oh! if thou mightst not e'er grow wise
With the sad learning born of sighs;
If those soft eyes might never here
Grow dim for any bitter tear.

Vain thought,—no creature born of earth
Blooms best 'neath cloudless skies of mirth;
Only soft rains and clouds can dress
Life's tree with flowers of blessedness.

Whate'er the lot thy fate shall give,
At least, while life is mine to live,
Thou shalt not lack a share of love,
My little lamb, my little dove!

SONG.

It was not that thy eyes
Were blue as autumn skies,
It was not that thy hair
Was as an angel's fair.

No excellence of form could move
A finer soul to so much love.

Nor that in thee I sought
For precious gems of thought,
Nor ever hoped to find
Hid treasure in thy mind.
Gray wisdom comes with time and age,
And thine was an unwritten page.

But that I seemed in thee
My other self to see,
Yet purer and more high
Than meets my inner eye,
Like that enamoured boy who, gazing down,
His lower self would in his higher drown.

THE ORGAN-BOY.

GREAT brown eyes,
Thick plumes of hair,
Old corduroys
The worse for wear;
A buttoned jacket,
And peeping out
An ape's grave poll,
Or a guinea pig's snout;
A sun-kissed face,
And a dimpled mouth,
With the white flashing teeth
And soft smile of the south;
A young back bent,
Not with age or care,
But the load of poor music
'Tis fated to bear:
But a commonplace picture
To commonplace eyes,
Yet full of a charm
Which the thinker will prize.

They were stern cold rulers,
Those Romans of old,
Scorning art and letters
For conquest and gold;
Yet leavening mankind,
In mind and in tongue,
With the laws that they made
And the songs that they sung:
Sitting rose-crowned,
With pleasure-choked breath,
As the nude young limbs crimsoned,
Then stiffened in death;
Piling up monuments
Greater than praise,
Thoughts and deeds that shall live
To the latest of days:
Adding province to province,
And sea to sea,
Till the idol fell down
And the world rose up free.

And this is the outcome,
This vagabond child
With that statue-like face
And eyes soft and mild,
This creature so humble,
So gay, yet so meek,
Whose sole strength is only
The strength of the weak;
Of those long cruel ages
Of lust and of guile,
Naught left us to-day
But an innocent smile.
For the laboured appeal
Of the orator's art,
A few childish accents
That reach to the heart.
For those stern legions speeding
O'er sea and o'er land,
But a pitiful glance
And a suppliant hand.
I could moralize still;
But the organ begins,

And the tired ape swings downward
And capers and grins:

And away flies romance.
And yet, time after time,
As I dwell on days spent
In a sunnier clime,
Of blue lakes deep set
In the olive-clad mountains,
Of gleaming white palaces
Girt with cool fountains,
Of minsters where every
Carved stone is a treasure,
Of sweet music hovering
'Twixt pain and 'twixt pleasure;
Of chambers enriched,
On all sides, overhead,
With the deathless creations
Of hands that are dead;
Of still cloisters holy,
And twilight arcade,
Where the lovers still saunter
Thro' chequers of shade;
Of tomb and of temple,
Arena and column,
'Mid to-day's garish splendours,
Sombre and solemn;
Of the marvellous town
With the salt-flowing street,
Where colour burns deepest,
And music most sweet;
Of her the great mother,
Who centuries sate
'Neath a black shadow blotting
The days she was great;
Who was plunged in such shame—
She, our source and our home—
That a foul spectre only
Was left us of Rome;
She who, seeming to sleep
Thro' all ages to be,
Was the priests', is mankind's,
Was a slave, and is free!

I turn with grave thought
To this child of the ages,
And to all that is writ
In Time's hidden pages.
Shall young Howards or Guelphs,
In the days that shall come,
Wander forth seeking bread
Far from England and home?

Shall they sail to new continents,
English no more,
Or turn—strange reverse—
To the old classic shore?
Shall fair locks and blue eyes,
And the rose on the cheek,
Find a language of pity
The tongue cannot speak—
"Not English, but angels?"
Shall this tale be told
Of Romans to be
As of Romans of old?
Shall they too have monkeys
And music? Will any
Try their luck with an engine
Or toy spinning-jenny?

Shall we too be led
By that mirage of Art
Which saps the true strength
Of the national heart?
The sensuous glamour,
The dreamland of grace,
Which rot the strong manhood
They fail to replace;
Which at once are the glory,
The ruin, the shame,
Of the beautiful lands
And ripe souls whence they came?

Oh, my England! oh, Mother
Of Freemen! oh, sweet,
Sad toiler majestic,
With labour-worn feet!

Brave worker, girt round,
Inexpugnable, free,
With tumultuous sound
And salt spume of the sea,
Fenced off from the clamour
Of alien mankind
By the surf on the rock,
And the shriek of the wind,
Tho' the hot Gaul shall envy,
The cold German flout thee,
Thy far children scorn thee,
Still thou shalt be great,
Still march on uncaring,
Thy perils unsharing,
Alone, and yet daring
Thy infinite fate.
Yet ever remembering
The precepts of gold,
That were written in part
For the great ones of old—
"Let other hands fashion
The marvels of art;
To thee fate has given
A loftier part.
To rule the wide peoples;
To bind them to thee"
By the sole bond of loving,
That bindeth the free.
To hold thy own place,
Neither lawless nor slave;
Not driven by the despot,
Nor tricked by the knave.

But these thoughts are too solemn,
So play, my child, play,
Never heeding the connoisseur
Over the way,
The last dances of course;
Then, with scant pause between,
"Home, Sweet Home," the "Old Hundredth,"
And "God Save the Queen."

See the poor children swarm
From dark court and dull street,
As the gay music quickens
The lightsome young feet.
See them now whirl away,
Now insidiously come,
With a coy grace which conquers
The squalor of home.
See the pallid cheeks flushing
With innocent pleasure
At the hurry and haste
Of the quick-footed measure.
See the dull eyes now bright,
And now happily dim,
For some soft-dying cadence
Of love-song or hymn.
Dear souls, little joy
Of their young lives have they,
So thro' hymn-tune and song-tune
Play on, my child, play.

For tho' dull pedants chatter
Of musical taste,
Talk of hindered researches,
And hours run to waste;
Tho' they tell us of thoughts
To ennoble mankind
Which your poor measures chase
From the labouring mind;
While your music rejoices
One joyless young heart,
Perish bookworms and books,
Perish learning and art—
Of my vagabond fancies
I'll e'en take my fill.
"Qualche cosa, signor?"
Yes, my child, that I will.

PROCESSIONS.

To and fro, to and fro,
The long, long processions go,

Fainter now and now more bright,
Now in shadow, now in light;
Gay and sad, and gay again,
Mixed of pleasure, mixed of pain.
Bridal song and burial dirge,
Rippling blue and leaden surge;
Sunlit plain and storm-wrapt hill,
Saintly lives or stained with ill;
Youth and fire and frolic mirth,
Cold age bending back to earth;
Hope and faith and high endeavour,
Dead lives slowly waning ever;
Gleams of varying sun and shade,
Buds that burst, and flowers that fade;
Lives that spring, and lives that fall,
And a Hidden Will o'er all.

FOR LIFE.

SHUT in by self, as by a brazen wall,
In a dry, windless court alone,
Where no refreshing dews of eve may fall,
Nor morning sun has shone.

But ever broader, ever higher, higher,
And ever yearly stronger grown,
In long circuitous folds high towers aspire
Around her central throne.

And every year adds some fair outer-court,
Green, lit with fountains, tended well,
Some dainty pleasaunce fit for joy and sport,
But not wherein to dwell.

Or some high palace spired with fretted gold,
And tricked with gems of thought and art;
In blank perspective ranks its chambers cold,
Too fair to touch the heart.

For far within the inmost coil of towers,
Wrapt round with shadows like a cloak,
Where on the twilight hush of slow-paced hours
Full utterance never broke;

Neither of laughter nor the painful sound
Of great thoughts come to sudden birth,
Nor murmurs from the Sea that frets around
The dull laborious earth;

Nor voice of love or child, nor note of glee,
Nor sigh, nor any weal nor woe—
Naught but a chill, at times, as hopelessly
The slow years come and go;

She broods immured, a devil or a saint,
Shut fast within a lonely cell,
Peopled with beatific visions faint,
Or ghostly shapes of hell.

And every year she hears from some high gate
That breaks the dizzy circuit of the wall,
By hands invisible, but strong as fate,
The loud portcullis fall.

And every year upon her duller ear
Faint and more faint the outward echoes come,
Fainter the mingled tones of hope and fear,
To this her cloistered home.

Till, when the weary circuit's done and past,
The last gate clangs, the tall towers sway and fall,
A great voice calls with thunders, and at last
The captive breaks her thrall!

IN THE PARK.

THE stock-jobbers' madams dash
In splendour thro' park and street.
'Tis a lightning of wheels that flash,
'Tis a thunder of high-stepping feet.
Shrink aside, vile churl, for these princesses bold—
These creatures of jewels and ermine and gold—

As they loll by in insolent pride,
Scarce deigning a glance of the eye,
They scatter their mud stains far and wide
On the humbler passer-by—
Some rhymester it may be, whose bitter pen
Shall pay them their mud stains with interest again.

And, meanwhile, in some fetid street
Their spouse and provider sits—
A swindler fattening on lie and cheat,
Sole fruit of his sordid wits—
Full fed and bloated, or wan and pale,
And haunted with fears of an imminent gaol.

When my lady of high degree
Rolls by with her lackeys ablaze,
It gladdens my heart, good madams, to see
The disdain of you in her gaze.
I love her little, but, matched with you,
I could fall on my knees to a pride so true.

Or when Lais rattles by
In her vesture of visible shame,
Poor child, I whisper, and who am I
To call her dead life by its name?
Sad tawdry splendours that, one sure day,
Will spread swift pinions and flutter away!

But with you, vile spawn of deceit,
What need to be chary of ire?
Get down, I say, on your useless feet,
And cleanse them with honest mire.
Down with you, 'tis time, ere your coaches be made
The central block of a new barricade.

Yet, perhaps, since in this poor life
Things are double, each against each,
Among you sometimes is the mother and wife
With her darlings to cherish and teach,
The gentle lady, tender and kind,
With no shadow of evil on heart or mind.

Ah, riddle of things! ah, great
Perpetual struggle and war!
The good which should be, inseparate,
From the evil things that are—
How shall I, with purblind vision, arraign
The marvellous measures of joy and pain?

Roll by then, brave dames, roll by;
You are part of a scheme, I trow.
No more will I look with a covetous eye
On your splendours of pomp and show;
For I see in your gorgeous chariots the strife,
The problem, the wonder, the satire, of life.

LOSS AND GAIN.

FROM day to day, from year to year,
New waves of change assail us here;
Each day, each year, prolongs the chain
Where pleasure alternates with pain.

New earth-born exhalations rise,
To hide the heavens from our eyes;
New clouds obscure the vision fair,
Which once was round us everywhere.

New precious obligations come,
New sanctities of love and home,
New tender hopes, new anxious fears,
And sweet experiences of tears.

Old tastes are lost, old thoughts grow strange,
Old longings gradually change,
Old faiths seem no more dear or true,
Lost in the full light of the new.

Youth's boundless aspirations fled,
And every wild ambition dead;
Love not a meteor blinding sight,
But a pure ray of sober light.

And for the passionate self of old,
A deep affection, calm, not cold;
A pitying love serenely kind,
A broader trust, a juster mind,
A faith which occupies the heart,
Tho' the brain halts to bear its part,
Which threat and promise fail to move,
Like the dim consciousness of love.

Tho' much be taken, much is left,
Not all forsaken nor bereft;
From change on change we come to rest,
And the last moment is the best.

SONG.

"ONLY a woman's hair,"
A fair lock severed and dead;
But where is the maiden—where
That delicate head?

Perhaps she is rich and fair,
Perhaps she is poor and worn,
And 'twere better that one somewhere
Had never been born.

And the careless hand that threw
That faded tress away—
Ah! the false heart that once seemed true,
Ah! love flung away.

THE APOLOGY.

I MAY not scorn, I cannot prize
Those whose quick-coming fancies rise
Only in quaint disguise—

Some trick of speech, or mien, or dress,
Some obsolete uncomeliness,
Some ancient wickedness.

Strange words antique for things not strange,
Like broken tower and mould'ring grange,
Made fair through time and change.

Legends of knight, and squire, and dame,
With this our common life the same
In glory and in shame.

Mean lives and narrow aims which owe
The glamour and the charm they show
To that strange "Long ago;"

Nay, meaner, lower than our own,
Because To-day is wider grown,
Knows deeper, and is known.

I doubt if anything there be
Which best thro' mask of chivalry,
Reveals myself to me;

Myself, its yearnings and desires,
Its glimpses of supernal fires,
The something which aspires;

Myself, the thing of blot and stain,
Which fallen, rises, falls again,
A mystery of pain;

Myself, the toiler slow to earn,
The thinker sowing words that burn,
The sensuous in turn,

The vanquished, the disgraced, the saint,
Now free as air, now bound and faint,
By everyday constraint.

Or, if too near the present lies
For common brains and common eyes
To probe its mysteries,

If feeble fancy fails to tear
The outer husk of fact, and bare
The seed to vital air,

But too extended, too immense,
Life's orb a vast circumference
Stretches for mortal sense;

If simpler shows the past, more fair,
Set in a pure and luminous air,
Not dimmed by mists of care,

Seeming to breathe a lighter strain
Of lutes and lyres where none complain
With undertones of pain;—

If haply there we seem to view
Ourselves, behind a veil, yet true
The germ from which we grew;

Not less our duty and our pride
Forbid to leave unsought, untried,
The glories at our side.

What? shall the limner only paint
Blue hills with adumbrations faint,
Or misty aureoled saint,

And scorn to ponder flower or tree,
Ripe fields, child-faces, summer sea,
And all fair things that be;

Nor care thro' passion's endless play,
Our living brethren to portray,
Who fare to doom to-day,

When the sun's finger deigns to trace
Each line and feature of man's face,
Its beauty and disgrace?

Or shall the skilled musician dare
Only to sound some jocund air
Arcadian, free from care,

Round whom in strains that scorn control
The mighty diapasons roll,
That speak from soul to soul;

Our mystical modern music deep,
Not piped by shepherds to their sheep,
But wrung from souls that weep;

Where seldom melody is heard,
Nor simple woodland note of bird,
So deep a depth is stirred,

Such blended harmonies divine
Across the core of sweetness twine
As round the grape the vine?

Or shall some false cold dream of art
Corrupt the voice and chill the heart,
And turn us from our part,

Blot out the precious lesson won
From all the ages past and done,
That bard and seer are one?

Dull creed of earthy souls! who tell
That, be the song of heaven or hell,
Who truly sings, sings well,

And with the same encomiums greet
The satyr baring brutish feet,
And pure child-angels sweet;

Whose praise in equal meed can share
The Mænad with distempered hair,
The cold Madonna fair.

Great singers of the past! whose song
Still streams down earthward pure and strong,
Free from all stain of wrong.

Whose lives were chequered, but whose verse
The generations still rehearse;
Yet never soul grew worse.

What is it that these would? shall I,
Born late in time, consent to lie
In the old misery?

I—who have learnt that flesh is dust,
What gulfs dissever love from lust,
The wrongful from the just—

Put on again the rags of sense,
A Pagan without innocence,
A Christian in offence?

Perish the thought! I am to-day
What God and Time have made me; they
Have ordered, I obey.

And day by day the labouring earth
Whirls on—glad mysteries of birth,
Sad death throes, sorrow, mirth,

Youth's flower just bursting into bloom,
Wan age, a sun which sets in gloom,
The cradle, and the tomb;

These are around me—hope and fear,
Not fables, but alive and near,
Fresh smile and scarce-dried tear;

These are around me, these I sing,
These, these of every thought and thing,
My verse shall heavenward wing.

The sun but seems to kiss the hill,
And all the vast eternal Will
Is moving, working, still

God is, Truth lives, and overhead
Behold a visible glory spread;
Only the past is dead.

Courage! arise; if hard it seem
To sing the present, yet we deem
'Tis worthier than a dream.

Awake, arise, for to the bold
The seeming desert comes to hold
Blossoms of white and gold.

* * * *

Shall I then choose to take my side
With those who love their thoughts to hide
In vague abstractions wide?

Whose dim verse struggles to recall
The hopes, the fears that rise and fall
Deep in the souls of all.

Who fitly choose a fitting theme.
Not things which neither are nor seem,
No visionary dream,

But the great psalm of life, the long
Harmonious confluence of song,
Thro' all the ages strong,

But grown to wider scale to-day,
And sweeping fuller chords than they
Knew who have passed away.

A worthy theme for worthy bard
But all too often blurred and marred
By intonations hard.

So that the common eye and ear
Can dimly see and faintly hear
What should be bright and clear.

Who wing the fiery thought so high,
An arrow shot into the sky,
Its failing forces die,

And all the straining eye discerns
Is but a spark which feebly burns,
Then quenched to earth returns.

Or with a borrowed lyre devote
Hoarse accent and untuneful throat
To sound a difficult note,

By currents of conflicting thought,
And counter themes which rise unsought,
And jangling chords distraught.

Not song, but science, sign not sound,
Not soaring to high heaven, but bound
Fast to the common ground.

Who with a pitiless skill dissect
What secret sources, vexed and checked,
Surge upward in effect,

And trace in endless struggling rhyme
How hearts forlorn of love and time
Have rotted into crime.

Or those who, baffled and opprest
By life's incessant fierce unrest,
Where naught that is seems best,

Assail the tyrant, lash the wrong,
Till but a wild invective long,
Is left in lieu of song.

Most precious all, yet this is sure,
The song which longest shall endure
Is simple, sweet, and pure.

Not psychologic riddles fine,
Not keen analysis, combine
In verse we feel divine.

Nor fierce o'erbalanced rage alone,
Which mars the rhyme, and dulls the tone—
They may not sing who groan;

But a sweet cadence, wanting much
Of depth, perhaps, and fire, but such
As finer souls can touch,

To finer issues; such as come
To him who far afield must roam,
Thinking old thoughts of home.

Or who in Sabbath twilights hears
His children lisp a hymn, and fears
Lest they should see his tears.

* * * *

Wherefore, my soul, if song be thine,
If any gleam of things divine
Thro' thee may dimly shine,

If ever any faintest note
Of far-off sweetness swell thy throat,
True echo tho' remote,

This is my task, to sing To-day,
Not dead years past and fled away,
But this alone—To-day.

Or if I pause a little space
Striving, across the gulf, to trace
Some fine, forgotten face—

Some monarch of the race whose name
Still lives upon the lips of fame,
Touched by no stain of shame;

Some sweet old love-tale, ever young,
Which of old time the burning tongue
Of god-like bard has sung;

Some meed of effort nobly won,
Some more than human task begun,
Precious though left undone;

Some awful story, strong to show
How passions unrestricted flow
Into a sea of woe;

Not less my powers I strive to bend,
Not less my song aspires to tend
To one unchanging end,

By lofty aspirations, stirred
Thro' homely music, daily heard,
Trite phrase and common word,

Simple, but holding at the core
Thoughts which strange speech and varied lore
Have hid from men before.

To lift how little howsoe'er
The hearts of toilers struggling here,
In joyless lives and sere.

To make a little lighter yet
Their lives by daily ills beset,
Whom men and laws forget.

To sing, if sing I must, of love
As a pure spell, with power to move
Dull hearts to things above.

But choosing rather to portray
The warring tides of thought which stray
Thro' doubting souls to-day.

Or if at times, with straining eye
And voice, I dwell on things which lie
Hidden in Futurity,

And strive to tell in halting rhyme
The glorious dawn, the golden prime,
The victories of Time,

The race transfigured, wrong redressed,
None worn with labour, nor oppressed,
But peace for all and rest,

And knowledge throwing wide the shrine
From whose broad doorways seems to shine
An effluence Divine ;—

If of these visions fain to dream,
Not less I hold, whate'er may seem,
The Present for my theme,

The vain regret remembering,
Which lost occasion knows to bring,—
Afraid, yet bound, to sing.

SONG.

Ah ! love is like a tender flower
Hid in the opening leaves of life,
Which, when the springtide calls, has power
To scorn the elemental strife—
So strong, that well it knows to gain
Fresh sweetness from the wind and rain.

So strong, and yet so weak, alas !
It waits the wooing of the sun ;
'Mid frosts and snows the brief hours pass,
And when they melt the spring is done.
Gay blooms and honeyed fruits may come,
But spring is dead, and birds are dumb.

AS IN A PICTURE.

White, on a cliff they stood ;
Beyond, a cypress wood.

Three there were—one who wept,
And one as though he slept ;
One with wide steadfast eyes
Fixed in a sad surprise.

Day, like a dying hymn,
Grew gradually dim.

A solitary star
Gleamed on them from afar.

Beneath, by sand and cave
Sobbed the continual wave.

Long time in reverent thought
Who these might be I sought,

Then suddenly I said,
"Oh, Lord of quick and dead !"

AT AN ALMSHOUSE.

Beneath these shadows holy
Age rests, or paces slowly,
And muses, muses always
On that which once has been,
Recalling years long ended,
And vanished visions splendid ;
The throb, the flush of old days,
When all the world was green.

When every hour brought pleasure,
And every flower a treasure,
And whispered words were spoken,
And love was everywhere.
The swift brief hour of passion,
And then the old, old fashion,
The childish accents broken—
Oh, precious days and fair !

The years of self-denial,
Blissful tho' full of trial,
The young blooms waxing stronger,
The older come to fruit.

The tranquil days of gladness,
The gradual calm and sadness,
When childhood cheers no longer,
And all the house is mute.

Gone, but not wholly taken;
Left, yet not all forsaken.
Again the worn hearts cherish
The memories of home;
Again love-whispers greet them,
Their children run to meet them,
Blest dreams which never perish
Until the end be come.

A YORKSHIRE RIVER.

THE silent surfaces sleep
With a sullen viscous flow,
And scarce in the squalid deep
Swing the dead weeds to and fro,
And no living thing is there to swim or creep
In the sunless gulfs below.

And beneath are the ooze and the slime,
Where the corpse lies as it fell,
The hidden secrets of crime
Which no living tongue shall tell,
The shameful story of time,
The old, old burden of hell.

All the grasses upon the bank
Are bitter with scurf and drift,
And the reeds are withered and dank;
And sometimes, when the smoke clouds shift,
You may see the tall shafts in a hideous rank
Their sulphurous fumes uplift.

From the black blot up the stream
The funeral barges glide,
And the waves part as in a dream,
From broad bow and sunken side;
And 'tis "greed, greed!" hisses from coal and from steam,
Foul freightage and turbid tide,

Like the life of a slumb'ring soul
Grown dull in content and health,
Whose dark depths lazily roll,
Whose still currents creep by stealth.
Nor sorrow nor yearning comes to control
The monotonous tide of wealth.

Fair or foul, in life as in death,
One blight and corruption o'er all,
Blow on them, great wind, with thy breath,
Fall, blinding water-floods, fall,
Till the dead life below awakeneth,
And deep unto deep doth call!

FOR JUDGMENT.

THE form was young, the face was fair,
Her hands seemed still together tied,
'Twas as if Eve was standing there,
With the stern guardian at her side.

I mused on all the depths of will,
Of judgment, knowledge, right, and wrong.
The pleadings crept their course, and still
I sat in musings sad and long.

But when they ceased the tale of shame,
And the cold voice pronounced her name,
But one thought held me, that was all,
'Twas thus we did my sister call.

ODE ON A FAIR SPRING MORNING.

COME, friend, let us forget
The turmoil of the world a little while,
For now the soft skies smile,
With dew the flowers are wet.
Let us away awhile
With fierce unrest and carking thoughts of care,
And breathe a little while the jocund air,
And sing the joyous measures sung
By blither singers, when the world was young.

For still the world is young, for still the spring
Renews itself, and still the lengthening hours
Bring back the month of flowers;
The leaves are green to-day as those of old,
For Chaucer and for Shakspeare; still the gold
Of August gilds the rippling breadths of wheat;
Young maids are fair and sweet
As when they frolicked gay, with flashing feet,
Round the old May-pole. All young things rejoice.
No sorrow dulls the blackbird's mellow voice,
Thro' the clear summer dawns or twilights long.
With aspect not more dim
Thro' space the planets swim
Than of old time o'er the Chaldean plain.
We only, we alone,
Let jarring discords mar our song.
And find our music take a lower tone.
We only with dim eyes
And laboured vision feebly strain,
And flout the undying splendours of the skies.

Oh, see how glorious show,
On this fair morn in May, the clear-cut hills,
The dewy lawns, the hawthorns white,
Argent on plains of gold, the growing light
Pure as when first on the young earth
The faint warm sunlight came to birth.
There is a nameless air
Of sweet renewal over all which fills
The earth and sky with life, and everywhere,
Before the scarce seen sun begins to glow,
The birds awake which slumbered all night long,
And with a gush of song,
First doubting of their strain, then full and wide
Raise their fresh hymns thro' all the country side;
Already, above the dewy clover,
The soaring lark begins to hover
Over his mate's low nest;
And soon, from childhood's early rest
In hall and cottage, to the casement rise
The little ones with their fresh opened eyes.
And gaze on the old Earth, which still grows new,
And see the tranquil heaven's unclouded blue,
And, since as yet no sight nor sound of toil
The fair spread, peaceful picture comes to soil,

Look with their young and steadfast gaze
Fixed in such artless sweet amaze
As Adam knew, when first on either hand
He saw the virgin landscapes of the morning land.

Oh, youth, dawn, springtide, triune miracle,
Renewing life in earth, and sky, and man,
By what eternal plan
Dost thou revive again and yet again?
There is no morn that breaks,
No bud that bursts, no life that comes to birth,
But the rapt fancy takes,
Far from the duller plains of mind and earth,
Up to the source and origin of things,
Where, poised on brooding wings,
It seems to hover o'er the immense inane,
And see the suns, like feeble rings of light,
Orb from the gray, and all the young-ling globe
A coil of vapour circling like a dream,
Then fixed compact for ever; the first beam
Strike on the dark and undivided sea,
And wake the deeps with life. Oh, mystery
That still dost baffle thought,
Though by all sages sought,
And yet art daily done
With each returning sun,
With every dawn which reddens in the skies,
With every opening of awakened eyes!

How shall any dare to hold
That the fair world growing old,
Hath spent in vanished time
The glories of its prime?
Beautiful were the days indeed
Of the Pagan's simple creed,
When all of life was made for girl and boy,
And all religion was but to enjoy;
The fair chivalric dream
To some may glorious seem,
When from the sleeping centuries,
Awakened Europe seemed to rise;
It may be that we cannot know,
In these ripe years, the glory and the glow
Of those young hours of time, and careless days,
Borne down too much by knowledge, and opprest,
To halt a little for the needed rest,
And yield ourselves awhile to joy and praise;
Yet every year doth bring
With each recurrence of the genial hour
The infancy of spring,
With store of tender leaf and bursting flower,
And still to every home
Fresh childish voices come,
And eyes that opened last in Paradise,
And with each rosy dawn
Are night and death withdrawn;
Another world rises for other eyes;
Again begins the joy, the stress, the strife,
Ancient as time itself, and wide as life.

We are the ancients of the world indeed;
No more the simple creed,
When every hill and stream and grove
Was filled with shy divinities of love,
Allures us, serving as our King
A Lord of grief and suffering.

Too much our wisdom burdens to permit
The fair, thin visions of the past, to flit
From shade to shade, or float from hill to hill.
We are so compassed round by ill,
That all the music of our lives is dumb,
Amid the turbulent waves of sound that rise,
The discord born of doubts, and tears, and sighs,
Which daily to the listening ear do come;
Nay, oft, confounded by the incessant noise
Of vast world-engines, grinding law on law,
We lose the godhead that our fathers saw,
And all our higher joys,
And bear to plod on daily, deaf and blind,
To a dark goal we dare not hope to find.

But grows the world then old?
Nay, all things that are born of time
Spring upwards, and expand from youth to prime,
Ripen from flower to fruit,
From song-tide till the days are mute,
Green blade to ear of gold.
But not the less through the eternal round
The sleep of winter wakes in days of spring,
And not the less the bare and frozen ground
Grows blithe with blooms that burst and birds that sing.
Nature is deathless; herb and tree,
Through time that has been and shall be,
Change not, although the outward form
Seem now the columned palm
Nourished in zones of calm,
And now the gnarled oak that defies the storm.
The cedar's thousand summers are no more
To her than are the fleeting petals gay
Which the young spring, ere March is o'er,
Scarce offered, takes away.
Eternal are her works. Unchanging she,
Alike in short-lived flower and ever-changing sea.

We, too, are deathless; we,
Eternal as the Earth,
We cannot cease to be
While springtide comes or birth.
If our being cease to hold
Reflected lights divine
On budding lives, with every day they shine
With unabated gold.
Though lost it may be to our mortal sight,
It cannot be that any perish quite—
Only the baser part forgets to be.
And if within the hidden Treasury
Of the great Ruler we awhile should rest,
To issue with a higher stamp imprest,
With all our baser alloy purged and spent,
Were we not thus content?

Our thoughts too mighty are
To be within our span of years confined,
Too deep and wide and far,
The hopes, the fears, that crowd the labouring mind,

The sorrows that oppress,
The sanctities that bless,
Are vaster than this petty stage of things.
The soaring fancy mounts on careless wings
Beyond the glimmer of the furthest star.
The nightly watcher who with patient eye
Scans the illumined sky,
Knows when the outward rushing fire shall turn,
And in far ages hence shall brightly burn
For eyes to-day undreamt of. The clear voice
From Greece or Israel thro' the centuries heard
Still bids us tremble or rejoice,
Stronger than living look or word;
The love of home or race,
Which doth transfigure us, and seems to bring
On every heaven-lit face
Some shadow of the glory of our King,
Fades not on earth, nor with our years doth end;
Nay, even earth's poor physical powers transcend
The narrow bounds of space and time,
The swift thought by some mystic sympathy
Speeding through desert sand, and storm-tost sea.
And shall we hold the range of mind
Is to our little lives confined;
That the pure heart in some blest sphere above,
Loves not which here was set on fire of love;
The clear eye scans not still, which here could scan
The confines of the Universal plan;
The seer nor speaks nor thinks his thoughts sublime,
And all of Homer is a speck of lime?

Nay, friend, let us forget
The conflicts of our doubt a little while,
Again our springs shall smile;
We shall not perish yet.
If God so guide our fate,
The nobler portions of ourselves shall last
Till all the lower rounds of life be past,
And we, regenerate.
We too again shall rise,
The same and not the same,
As daily rise upon the orient skies
New dawns with wheels of flame.
So, if it worthy prove,
Our being, self-perfected, shall upward move
To higher essence, and still higher grown,
Not sweeping idle harps before a throne,
Nor spending praise where is no need of praise,
But through unnumbered lives and ages come
From pure laborious days,
To an eternal home,
Where spring is not, nor birth, nor any dawn,
But life's full noontide never is withdrawn.

LOVE TRIUMPHANT.

Love took me up, a naked, helpless child,
Love laid me sleeping on the tender breast,

Love gazed on me with saintly eyes and mild,
Love watched me as I lay in happy rest,
Love was my childhood's stay, my chiefest good,
My daily friend, my solace, and my food.

But when to Love's own stature I was come,
Treading the paths where fabled Loves abound,
Hard by the Cytherean's magic home,
Loveless I paced alone the enchanted ground.
Some phantoms pale I marked, which fled away,
And lo, my youth was gone; my hair turned gray.

Loveless I lived long time, until I knew
A thrill since childish hours unknown before,
My cloistered heart forth to the wicket flew,
And Love himself was waiting at the door.
And now, howe'er the treacherous seasons move,
Love dwells with me again, and I with Love.

Love folds me round, Love walks with me, Love takes
My heart and burns it with a holy fire;
Love lays me on his silver wings, and makes
My fainting soul to thinner air aspire.
Love of the Source, the Race, the True, the Right,
This is my sole companion day and night.

TOLERANCE.

CALL no faith false which e'er has brought
Relief to any laden life,
Cessation from the pain of thought,
Refreshment 'mid the dust of strife.

What though the thing to which they kneel
Be dumb and dead as wood or stone,
Though all the rapture which they feel
Be for the worshipper alone?

They worship, they adore, they bow
Before the Ineffable Source, before
The hidden soul of good; and thou,
With all thy wit, what dost thou more?

Kneel with them, only if there come
Some zealot or sleek knave who strives
To mar the sanctities of home,
To tear asunder wedded lives;

Or who by subtle wile has sought,
By shameful promise, shameful threat,
To turn the thinker from his thought,
To efface the eternal landmarks set,

'Twixt faith and knowledge; hold not peace
For such, but like a sudden flame
Let loose thy scorn on him, nor cease
Till thou hast covered him with shame.

A HYMN IN TIME OF IDOLS.

THOUGH they may crowd
Rite upon rite, and mystic song on song;

Though the deep organ loud
Through the long nave reverberate full and strong;
Though the weird priest,
Whom rolling clouds of incense half conceal,
By gilded robes increased,
Mutter and sign, and proudly prostrate kneel;
Not pomp, nor song, nor bended knee
Shall bring them any nearer Thee.

I would not hold
Therefore that those who worship still where they,
In dear dead days of old,
Their distant sires, knelt once and passed away,
May not from carven stone,
High arching nave and reeded column fine,
And the thin soaring tone
Of the keen organ catch a breath divine,
Or that the immemorial sense
Of worship adds not reverence.

But by some bare
Hill side or plain, or crowded city street,
Wherever purer spirits are,
Or hearts with love inflamed together meet,
Rude bench and naked wall,
Humble and sordid to the world-dimmed sight,
On these shall come to fall
A golden ray of consecrating light,
And thou within the midst shalt there
Invisible receive the prayer.

In every home,
Wherever there are loving hearts and mild,
Thou still dost deign to come,
Clothed with the likeness of a little child;
Upon the hearth thou still
Dwellest with them at meat, or work, or play;
Thou who all space dost fill
Art with the pure and humble day by day;
Thou treasurest the tears they weep,
And watchest o'er them while they sleep.

Spirit and Word!
That still art hid in every faithful heart,
Indwelling Thought and Lord—
How should they doubt who know thee as thou art?
How think to bring thee near
By magic words, or signs, or any spell,
Who art among us here,
Who always in the loving soul dost dwell.
Who art the staff and stay indeed
Of the weak knees and hands that bleed?

Then let them take
Their pagan trappings, and their lifeless lore;
Arise O Lord and make
A worthy temple where was none before.
Each soul its own best shrine,
Its priesthood, its sufficient sacrifice,
Its cleansing fount divine,
Its hidden store of precious sanctities.
Those only fit for priestcraft are
From whom their Lord and King is far.

ON A MODERN PAINTED WINDOW.

TIME was they lifted thee so high
Between the gazer and the sky,
That all the worshipper might see
Was God no more, but only thee.

So high was set thy cross, that they
Who would thy every thought obey,
Saw not thy gracious face, nor heard
More than an echo of thy word.

But now 'tis nearer to the ground,
The weeping women kneel around,
The scoffers sneering by, deride
Thy kingly claims, thy wounded side.

Only two beams of common wood,
And a meek victim bathed in blood,
Rude nails that pierce the tortured limb,
Mild eyes with agony grown dim.

Aye, but to those who know thee right
Faith strengthens with the nearer sight;
Love builds a deeper, stronger, creed
On those soft eyes and hands that bleed.

Raised but a little from the rest,
But higher therefore and more blest;
No more an empty priestly sign,
But the more human, more divine.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

THE long day wanes, the broad fields fade; the night,
The sweet June night, is like a curtain drawn.
The dark lanes know no faintest sound, and white
The pallid hawthorn lights the smooth-pleached lawn.
The scented earth drinks from the silent skies
Soft dews, more sweet than softest harmonies.

There is no stir nor breath of air, the plains
Lie slumbering in the close embrace of night,
Only the rustling landrail's note complains;
The children's casement shows the half-veiled light,
Only beneath the solemn elm trees tall
The fountain seems to fall and cease to fall.

No change will come, nor any sound be made
Thro' the still hours which shall precede the day;
Only the bright-eyed stars will slowly fade,
And a thin vapour rise up cold and gray,
Then a soft breeze will whisper fresh and cold,
And up the swift sun hurries red as gold.

And then another dawn, another link,
To bind the coming to the vanished day,
Another foot-pace nearer to the brink
Whereon our perilous footsteps hardly stay,
Another line upon the secular page
Of birth-throes, bridals, sick-beds, youth and age.

Sweet summer night, than summer
days more fair,
Safe haven of the weary and forlorn,
Splendid the gifts the luminous noon-
tides bear,
Lovely the opening eyelids of the
morn;
But thou with softest touch trans-
figurest
This toilworn earth into a heaven of
rest.

GOOD IN EVERYTHING.

THE white shafts of the dawn dispel
The night clouds banked across the
sky;
The sluggish vapours curl and die,
And the day rises. It is well.

Unfold, ye tender blooms of life;
Sing, birds; let all the world be
gay:
'Tis well,—the morning of our day
Must rise 'mid joyous songs and strife.

Beat, noonday sun, till all the plain
Swoons, and life seems asleep or
dead:
'Tis well,—the harvest of our bread
Is sown in sorrow and reaped in pain.

Close, evening shadows, soft and deep,
When life reviving breathes once
more;
Fall, silent night, when toil is o'er,
And the soul folds her wings in sleep.

Come joy or grief, come right or wrong,
In good or evil, life or death;
We are the creatures of His breath:
Nor shall his hand forsake us long.

THE REPLY.

IF I were to answer you
As you would, my soul would soar
Like the lark from earth-born eyes,
Soar and hide in far-off skies,
Soar and come to mortal view
Nevermore.

Whatsoever chance befall,
Of myself I'd die possest.
If they hold a willing mind
Silken threads like steel can bind.
Only to be free is blest—
Free is all.

Press me not, of earth am I;
Paths there are I dare not tread.
Sweet are fields and flowers, the smile
Of girlhood; but a little while
Blossoms youth, and overhead
Laughs the sky.

What have we to do with love,—
We for whom the seasons bring
Nothing else than golden hours,
Sun that burns, nor cloud that lowers,
Thro' whose veins the tides of spring
Lightly move?

But if any pain should come
To o'ercloud your summer, dear,
Pain another's heart may share,
Come and we our fate will dare,—
Come, forgetting doubt and fear,
To your home.

THE TOUCHSTONE.

SAID one, "'Tis Use must lend
The clue our thoughts to bend
To the true end."

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Then I. "But can your thought
Reach thus for ages sought,
The eternal 'Ought?'"

"Would not the martyr spurn
The truth you teach, to learn,
Rot, rather,—burn?"

"Were not death's self more sweet
Than to live incomplete
A life effete?"

Then he. "But who shall hold
They grasped not over bold
Their faith of old,"

"Hoarding a random creed
For which they bore to bleed,
Not proved indeed?"

"For who the truth shall seize
Grasps it by slow degrees,
Not snatched, as these."

"And who would save his kind
Must spend, the clue to find,
Not heart, but mind."

Then I. "But mind alone,
Is dead as wood or stone,
Stirs naught and none."

"And who with prying eyes
Will motive analyze,
For him it dies."

"And all his hours remain
A barren, endless plain,
Not joy nor pain:"

"A tideless, windless sea,
A blank eternity,
Still doomed to be."

Then he. "The Use we teach
All forms of being can reach,
Saves all by each."

"No hasty glance or blind,
To passing goods confined,
Changeful as wind;"

"But with a steadfast view,
Piercing the boundless blue,
Up to the True."

"Contented to efface
Self, if from out its place
Blossoms the race;"

"If from lives crushed and wrecked,
A perfected effect,
Man stands erect."

"To whom all pleasures show
An aspect mean and low
Beside to know."

"Holding all other thought
Than which for this is sought
A thing of naught."

"This seeking, nothing less,
What broader happiness
Most lives may bless?"

Then I. "If the desire
To which your thoughts aspire
Blazed forth afire;"

"If all the task were done,
All stubborn contests won
Beneath the sun;"

"If hope came not to cheer,
Nor bracing chill of fear,
Sweet sigh nor tear;"

"But all the race should sleep
In a broad calm, too deep
For one to weep."

"And o'er all lands should reign
A dull content inane,
Worse far than pain;"

"If, all its griefs forgot,
Slowly the race should rot,
Fade and be not;"

"Would not the thought oppress
The dream that once could bless,
With such distress,"

"That, from the too great strain,
Life withered, heart and brain,
Would rise in vain?"

Then he. "The outcome this
Of all philosophies,
'Who seeks shall miss.'"

"Who toil aright, for those
Life's pathway, ere it close,
Is as the rose."

"The spires of wisdom stand,
Piled by the unconscious hand,
From grains of sand."

"And pleasure comes unsought,
To those who take but thought
For that, they ought;"

"A bloom, a perfume rare,
A deep-hid jewel fair
For those who dare."

"So who the race aright
Loveth, a clearer sight
Shall yet requite;"

"And, since he seeks it less,
An unsought happiness
His toil shall bless."

Then I. "'Twere strange indeed
Should not our longing need
A clearer creed."

"If only this were blest,
To ponder well how best
To serve the rest."

"Since grows; 'tis understood,
The happy multitude,
From each man's good,"

"From general sacrifice,
How should for each arise,
Content for sighs?"

"Or shall we deem it true
That who the road pursue
To gain the True,"

"May not the summit gain
By paths direct and plain
To heart and brain,"

"But with averted mind,
And sedulously blind,
The end must find?"

"Is truth a masker, then,
Rejoiced to mock the ken
Of toiling men?"

"Now tricked as Use, now Right,
But always in despite
Of our poor sight."

"Doth it not rather seem
We live, whate'er we deem,
As in a dream,"

"Acting, but acting still
The dictates to fulfil
Of a sure Will,"

"Seeing in Use and Right,
Twin rays indefinite
Of a great Light,"

"A mystic Sun and clear,
Which through mind's atmosphere
Can scarce appear,"

"But which not less we know;
In all fair flowers that grow,
Loud storms that blow,"

"In noble thought and word,
In aspirations heard,
When hearts are stirred,"

"In every breathing breath,
Life that awakeneth,
Life that is death,"

"Whether serene it shine
Or clouds our view confine,
Wondrous, Divine?"

Then he. "Shall this excuse
Him who a dream should choose
Rather than Use,"

"That he prefer to hold
Some dark abstraction old,
Remote and cold,"

"Some thin ghost, fancy-dressed,
Whereby men's souls oppressed,
Forfeit the best,"

"And for a dream neglect
What splendours of effect
Their lives had decked?"

Then I. "Though mind and brain
Wither and are in vain,
And thought a pain;"

"Though sorrow, like a thief,
Follow to rob belief,
And faith be grief;"

"Though my obedience show
No fruit I here may know
Save utter woe;"

"Though health and strength decay;
Yea, though the Truth shall slay,
I will obey."

NOTHING LOST.

WHERE are last year's snows,
Where the summer's rose,—
Who is there who knows?

Or the glorious note
Of some singer's throat,
Heard in years remote?

Or the love they bore
Who, in days of yore,
Loved, but are no more?

Or the faiths men knew
When, before mind grew,
All strange things seemed true?

* * * *

The snows are sweet spring rain,
The dead rose blooms again,
Young voices keep the strain.

The old affection mild
Still springs up undefiled
For love, and friend, and child.

The old faiths grown more wide,
Purer and glorified,
Are still our lifelong guide.

Nothing that once has been,
Tho' ages roll between
And it be no more seen,

Can perish, for the Will
Which doth our being fulfil,
Sustains and keeps it still.

THE HIDDEN SELF.

I KNOW not if a keener smart
Can come to finer souls than his
Who hears men praise him, mind or heart,
For something higher than he is.

Who fain would say, "Behold me, friends,
That which I am, not what you deem,
A thing of low and narrow ends,
Sordid, not golden as I seem.

See here the hidden blot of shame,
The weak thought that you take for strong,
The brain too dull to merit fame,
The faint and imitative song."

But dares not, lest discovery foul
Not his name only, but degrade
Heights closed but to the soaring soul,
Names which scorn trembles to invade;

And doth his inner self conceal
From all men in his own despite,
Hiding what he would fain reveal,
And a most innocent hypocrite.

MARCHING.

ONCE, and once again,
From the thick crowd of men,
Loud toil and high endeavour,
There comes a secret sound,
Where the thinkers stand around,
And sometimes 'tis "For ever,"
Sometimes "Never."

Always that ceaseless throng
Has filed those paths along,
Those painful hills ascended;
Thro' fair meads of success,
Thro' barren sands they press,
Defeats and triumphs splendid,
Till 'tis ended.

The glory and the shame
Different, and yet the same
The efforts and the aspirations,
Unlike in mien and speech,
Pressed onwards each on each,
Go the endless alternations
Of the nations.

And the rhythm of their feet,
The ineffable low beat
Of those vast throngs pacing slowly,
Floats on the sea of Time
Like a musical low chime
From a far isle, mystic, holy,
Tolling slowly.

And from the endless column
Goes up that strange rhyme solemn
Of thoughts which naught shall sever,
The contrast sad and sweet,
Of opposite streams which meet;
Sometimes the glad "For ever,"
Sometimes "Never."

COURAGE!

THERE are who, bending supple knees,
Live for no end except to please,
Rising to fame by mean degrees;
But creep not thou with these.

They have their due reward; they bend
Their lives to an unworthy end—
On empty aims the toil expend
Which had secured a friend.

But be not thou as these, whose mind
Is to the passing hour confined;
Let no ignoble fetters bind
Thy soul, as free as wind.

Stand upright, speak thy thought, declare
The truth thou hast that all may share;
Be bold, proclaim it everywhere:
They only live who dare.

GILBERT BECKETT AND THE FAIR SARACEN.

THE last crusader's helm had gleamed
Upon the yellow Syrian shore;
No more the war-worn standards streamed,
The stout knights charged and fell no more;
No more the Paynim grew afraid—
The crescent floated o'er the cross.
But to one simple Heathen maid
Her country's gain was bitter loss;

For love, which knows not race or creed,
Had bound her with its subtle chain,—
Love, which still makes young hearts to bleed,
For this one, mingled joy with pain,
And left for one brief hour of bliss,
One little span of hopes and fears,
The memory of a parting kiss,
And what poor solace comes of tears.

A lowly English squire was he,
A prisoner chained, enslaved, and sold;
A lady she of high degree.
'Tis an old tale and often told:
'Twas pity bade the brown cheek glow,
'Twas love and pity drew the sigh,
'Twas love that made the soft tear flow,
The sweet sad night she bade him fly.

Far from the scorching Syrian plain
The brave ship bears the Saxon home;
Once more to mists and rains again,
And verdant English lawns, they come.
I know not if as now 'twas then,
Or if the growing ages move
The careless, changeful hearts of men
More slowly to the thoughts of love;

But woman's heart was then, as now,
Tender and passionate and true.
Think, gentle ladies, ye who know
Love's power, what pain that poor heart knew;
How, living always o'er again
The sweet short past, she knew, too late,
'Twas love had bound the captive's chain,
Which broken, left her desolate.

Till by degrees the full young cheek
Grew hollow, and the liquid eyes
Still gazing seaward, large and meek,
Took something of a sad surprise;

As one who learns, with a strange chill,
'Mid youth and wealth's unclouded day,
Of sad lives full of pain and ill,
And thinks, "And am I too as they?"

And by degrees most hateful grew
All things that once she held so dear—
The feathery palms, the cloudless blue,
Tall mosque and loud muezzin clear,
The knights who flashed by blinded street,
The lattice lit by laughing eyes,
The songs around the fountain, sweet
To maidens under Eastern skies.

And oft at eve, when young girls told
Tales precious to the girlish heart,
She sat alone, and loved to hold
Communion with her soul apart.
Till at the last, too great became
The hidden weight of secret care,
And girlish fears and maiden shame
Were gone, and only love was there.

And so she fled. I see her still
In fancy, desolate, alone,
Wander by arid plain and hill,
From early dawn till day was done;
Sun-stricken, hungry, thirsty, faint,
By perilous paths I see her move,
Clothed round with pureness like a saint,
And fearless in the might of love.

Till lo! a gleam of azure sea,
And rude ships moored upon the shore.
Strange, yet not wholly strange, for he
Had dared those mystic depths before.

And some good English seaman bold,
Remembering those he left at home,
Put gently back the offered gold,
And for love's honour bade her come.

And then they sailed. No pirate bark
Swooped on them, for the Power of Love
Watched o'er that precious wandering ark,
And this his tender little dove.
I see those stalwart seamen still
Gaze wondering on that childish form,
And shelter her from harm and ill,
And guide her safe through wave and storm.

Till under grayer skies a gleam
Of white, and taking land she went,
Following our broad imperial stream,
Or rose-hung lanes of smiling Kent.
Friendless I see her, lonely, weak,
Thro' fields where every flower was strange,
Go forth without a word to speak,
By burgh and thorp and moated grange.

For all that Love himself could teach
This passionate pilgrim to our shore,
Were but two words of Saxon speech,
Two little words and nothing more—
"Gilbert" and "London"; like a flame
To her sweet lips these sounds would come,
The syllables of her lover's name,
And the far city of his home.

I see her cool her weary feet
In dewy depths of crested grass;
By clear brooks fringed with meadow-sweet,
And daisied meads, I see her pass;

I see her innocent girlish glee,
I see the doubts which on her crowd,
O'erjoyed with bird, or flower, or tree,
Despondent for the fleeting cloud.

I see her passing slow, alone,
By burgh and thorp and moated grange,
Still murmuring softly like a moan
Those two brief words in accents strange.
Sometimes would pass a belted earl
With squires behind in brave array;
Sometimes some honest, toilworn churl
Would fare with her till close of day.

The saintly abbess, sweet and sage,
Would wonder as she ambled by,
Or white-plumed knight or long-haired page
Ride by her with inquiring eye.
The friar would cross himself, and say
His paternosters o'er and o'er;
The gay dames whisper Welladay!
And pity her and nothing more.

But tender women, knowing love
And all the pain of lonelihood,
Would feel a sweet compassion move,
And welcome her to rest and food,
And walk with her beyond the hill,
And kiss her cheek when she must go;
And "Gilbert" she would murmur still,
And "London" she would whisper low.

And sometimes sottish boors would rise
From wayside tavern, where they sate,
And leer from heated vinous eyes,
And stagger forth with reeling gait,
And from that strong unswerving will
And clear gaze shrink as from a blow;
And "Gilbert" she would murmur still,
And "London" she would whisper low.

Then by the broad suburban street,
And city groups that outward stray
To take the evening, and the sweet
Faint breathings of the dying day—
The gay young 'prentice, lithe and slim,
The wimpled maid, demurely shy,
The merchant somewhat grave and prim,
The courtier with his rolling eye.

And more and more the growing crowd
Would gather, wondering whence she came
And why, with boorish laughter loud,
And jeers which burnt her cheek with flame.
For potent charm to save from ill
But one word she made answer now:
For "Gilbert" she would murmur still,
And "Gilbert" she would whisper low.

Till some good pitiful soul—not then
Our London was as now o'ergrown—
Pressed through the idle throng of men,
And led her to his home alone,
And signing to her he would find
Him whom she sought, went forth again
And left her there with heart and mind
Distracted by a new-born pain.

For surely then, when doubt was o'er,
A doubt before a stranger came,
"He loved me not, or loves no more."
Oh, virgin pride! oh, maiden shame!

Almost she fled, almost the past
Seemed better than the pain she knew;
Her veil around her face she cast:
Then the gate swung—and he was true.

Poor child! they christened her, and so
She had her wish. Ah, yearning heart,
Was love so sweet then? would you know
Again the longing and the smart?
Came there no wintry hours when you
Longed for your native skies again,
The creed, the tongue your girlhood knew,
Aye, even the longing and the pain?

Peace! Love is Lord of all. But I,
Seeing her fierce son's mitred tomb,
Conjoin with fancy's dreaming eye
This love tale, and that dreadful doom.
Sped hither by a hidden will,
O'er sea and land I watch her go;
"Gilbert" I hear her murmur still,
And "London" still she whispers low.

TO A CHILD OF FANCY.

THE nests are in the hedgerows,
The lambs are on the grass;
With laughter sweet as music
Thy hours lightfooted pass,
My darling child of fancy,
My winsome prattling lass.

Blue eyes, with long brown lashes,
Thickets of golden curl,
Red little lips disclosing
Twin rows of fairy pearl,
Cheeks like the apple blossom,
Voice lightsome as the merle.

A whole Spring's fickle changes
In every short-lived day,
A passing cloud of April,
A flowery smile of May,
A thousand quick mutations
From graver moods to gay.

Far off, I see the season
When thy childhood's course is run,
And thy girlhood opens wider
Beneath the growing sun,
And the rose begins to redden,
But the violets are done.

And further still the summer,
When thy fair tree, fully grown,
Shall burgeon, and grow splendid
With blossoms of its own,
And the fruit begins to gather,
But the buttercups are mown.

If I should see thy autumn,
'Twill not be close at hand,
But with a spirit vision,
From some far distant land.
Or, perhaps, I hence may see thee
Amongst the angels stand.

I know not what of fortune
The future holds for thee,
Nor if skies fair or clouded
Wait thee in days to be,
But neither joy nor sorrow
Shall sever thee from me.

Dear child, whatever changes
Across our lives may pass,
I shall see thee still for ever,
Clearly as in a glass,
The same sweet child of fancy,
The same dear winsome lass.

A CYNIC'S DAY-DREAM.

SOME men there be who can descry
No charm in earth or sea or sky,
Poor painful bigot souls, to whom
All sights and sounds recall the tomb,
And some who do not fear to use
God's world for tavern or for stews.
Some think it wisdom to despoil
Their years for gold and troublous toil;
While others with cold dreams of art
Would feed the hunger of the heart,
And dilettanti dare to stand,
Eternities on either hand!

But with no one of these shall I
Make choice to live my life or die,—
Rather let me elect to give
What span of life is mine to live,
To honest labour, daily sought,
Crowned with the meed of patient thought;
To precious friends for ages dead,
But loved where'er their words are read;
To others living with us still,
Who sway the nation's mind and will
By eloquent pen or burning word,
Where hearts are fired and souls are stirred.
So thro' the tranquil evenings long,
Let us awake our souls with song,
Such song as comes where no words come,
And is most mighty when most dumb.
Then soar awhile on wings of art;
Not that which chokes the vulgar mart,
But subtle hints and fancies fine,
When least completed most divine,—
Sun-copies of some perfect thought,
Thro' bronze or canvas fitly wrought,
Known when in youth 'twas ours to see
Thy treasure-houses, Italy!

Then turn from these to grave debate
What change of laws befits the State,
By what wise schemes and precepts best
To raise the humble and oppressed,
And slay the twin reproach of Time,
The fiends of Ignorance and Crime.

Or what if I might come to fill
A calmer part, and dearer still,
With one attempered soul to share
The joys and ills 'tis ours to bear;
To grow together, heart with heart,
Into a whole where each is part;
To blend together, soul with soul,
Neither a part, but each the whole;
With strange creative thrills to teach
The dawning mind, the growing speech,
To bind around me precious bands
Of loving hearts and childish hands,
And lose the stains of time and sense
In those clear deeps of innocence?

So if kind fate should grant at length,
Ere frame and brain have lost their strength,
In my own country homestead dear,
To spend a portion of the year;
What joys I'll prove if modest wealth
Should come with still unbroken health!
There, sheltered from the ruder wind,
Thro' the thick woods we'll range, to find
The spring's first flower, the autumn's fruit,
Strange fungus or misshapen root.
Mark where the wood-quist or the thrush
Builds on tall pine or hazel bush;
See the brave bird with speckled breast
Brood fearless on the teeming nest,
And bid the little hands refrain
From every act of wrong and pain.

Observe the gossip conies sit
By their own doors, the white owl flit
Thro' the dim fields, while I enjoy
The wondering talk of girl or boy.
Sweet souls, which at life's portal stand,
And all within, a wonderland—
Oh, treasure of a guileless love,
Fit prelude of the joys above!

There, when the swift week nears its end,
To greet the welcome Sunday friend,
Through the still fields we'll wend our way,
To meet the guest at close of day.
And then, when little eyes in vain
Long time have sought the coming train,
A gradual distant sound, which fills
The bosom of the folded hills,
Till with white steam or ruddy light
The wayworn convoy leaps to sight,
Then stops and sets the traveller down,
Bringing the smoke and news of town.
And then the happy hours to come,
The walk or ride which leads us home,
Past the tall woods through which 'twould seem
Home's white walls hospitably gleam,—
The well-served meal, the neighbour guest,
The rosy darlings curled and dressed;
And, when the house grows silent, then
The lengthened talk on books and men;
And on the Sunday morning still,
The pleasant stroll by wood-crowned hill
To church, wherein my eyes grow dim
Hearing my children chant the hymn;
And seeing in their earnest look
Something of innocent rebuke,
I lose the old doubt's endless pain,
And am a little child again.

If fate should grant me such a home,
So sweet the tranquil days would come,
I should not need, I trust, to sink
My weariness in lust or drink.
Scant pleasure should I think to gain
From endless scenes of death and pain;
'Twould little profit me to slay
A thousand innocents a day;
I should not much delight to tear
With wolfish dogs the shrieking hare;
With horse and hound to track to death
A helpless wretch that gasps for breath;
To make the fair bird check its wing,
And drop, a dying, shapeless thing;
To leave the joy of all the wood
A mangled heap of fur and blood,
Or else escaping, but in vain,
To pine, a shattered wretch, in pain;
Teeming, perhaps, or doomed to see
Its young brood starve in misery;
With neither risk nor labour, still
To live for nothing but to kill—
I dare not! If perplexed I am
Between the tiger and the lamb;
If fate ordain that these shall give
Their poor brief lives that I may live:
Whate'er the law that bids them die,
Others shall butcher them, not I,—
Not such my work. Surely the Lord,
Who made the devils by a word,
Not men, but those who'd wield them well
Gave these sad tortures of his Hell.

Ah! fool and blind, to wander so;
Who hast lived long enough to know
With what insane confusions teem
The mazes of our waking dream,—

The dullard surfeited with gold
His bloated coffers fail to hold,
While the keen mind and generous brain
From penury aspire in vain;
Love's choicest treasures flung away
On some vile lump of coarsest clay;
Pure girlhood chained to wretches foul,
Tainted in body as in soul;
The precious love of wife or child
Not for the loving heart and mild,
But for the sullen churl, who ne'er
Knew any rule but that of fear;
Fame, like Titania, stooping down
To set on asses' ears a crown;
The shallow dunce, the fluent fool,
The butt and laughter of the school,
By fortune's strange caprice grown great,
A light of forum or debate;
The carnal lump devoid of grace,
With each bad passion in his face,
A saintly idol, round whose knees
Crowd throngs of burning devotees.

Great heaven! how strange the tangle is,
What old perplexity is this?
The very words of my complaint,
What else are they than echoes faint
Of the full fire, the passionate scorn,
Of high-souled singers and forlorn,
Who, in our younger England, knew
No care for aught but what was true,
But loved to lash with bitter hate
The shameless vices of the great;
Who bade, in far-off days of Rome,
In verse their indignation come;
Who, when we learn the secrets hid
Beneath the eldest Pyramid,
Or in those dim days further still,
Whose nameless ruin builds the hill,
Push back our search where'er we can,
Till first the ape became the man,
Will in rude satire bid us find
The earliest victories of mind?
Strong souls, rebellious with their lot,
Who longed for right and found it not;
Too strong to take things as they seem,
Too weak to comprehend the scheme,
Too deeply fired with honest trust
To dream that God might be unjust;
Yet, seeing how unequal show
His providences here below,
By paradoxes girt about,
Grew thro' excess of faith to doubt.
Oh, faithful souls, who love the true,
Tho' all be false, yet will not you;
Tho' wrong shall overcome the right,
Still is it hateful in your sight;
Tho' sorely tempted, you, and tried,
The truth stands always at your side;
Tho' falsehood wear her blandest smile,
You only she shall ne'er beguile;
For you, 'mid spectral sights and shows,
Life blushes with a hidden rose;
Thro' the loud din of lower things
You hear the sweep of angel wings,
And with a holy scorn possest,
Wait till these clamours sink to rest.

TO A LOST LOVE.

COLD snowdrops which the shrinking new-born year
Sends like the dove from out the storm-tost ark;
Sweet violets which may not tarry here
Beyond the earliest flutings of the lark;

Bright celandines which gild the tufted brake
Before the speckled thrush her nest has made;

Fair frail anemones which star-like shake
And twinkle by each sunny bank and glade;

Pale primroses wherewith the virgin spring,
As with a garland, wreathes her comely head;
No eyes have I for you, nor voice to sing.
My love is dead!

For she was young and pure and white as you,
And fairer and more sweet, and ah! as frail.
I dare not give to her the honour due,
Lest, for a strain so high, my voice should fail.

Like you, she knew the springtide's changeful hours;
Like you, she blossomed ere the coming leaf;
Like you, she knew not summer's teeming showers;
Like you, as comely, and, alas! as brief.

You may not see the roses, nor might she;
Such swift short beauty is its only fruit;
So a sweet silence is her eulogy,
And praise is mute.

*IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND.**

BENEATH the feathery fronds of palm
The white stone of a double grave,
And on the horizon, blue and calm,
The tropic ocean wave.

'Twas three years since, no more, that thou,
Dear friend, with us, in daily round,
Didst labour where we labour now,
'Mid London's surge of sound.

Treading the dull slow paths of law,
With little of reward or gain,
To feel a high ambition gnaw
Thy heart with tooth of pain,

And mark with scant content the crowd
Fulfil the immemorial rule
Which drives the fool with plaudits loud
To glorify the fool.

And so with patient scorn didst gain
To winnow from the growing heap
Of barren precedent the grain
Which hides there buried deep.

Till last, congenial labour came,
To call thee o'er the tropic sea,
And exile, gilt by toil and fame,
Severed thy friends from thee.

Brief as we hoped, but ah, how long!
Though lit by news of days well spent,
Of rights defined, of law made strong,
Of rebels grown content,

Of ordered codes so reasoned out,
Speaking with voice so true and clear,
That none who hear them still may doubt
"'Tis Justice speaketh here."

Yet not the less thou barest part
In the old talk we loved before;
The newest growths of thought or art
Delighted more and more,

* Ernest Schalch, Attorney-General for Jamaica, who, with his only sister, died of yellow fever in February, 1874.

And all the marvels of thy isle,
The lavish wealth of sea and land,
The skies with their too constant smile,
Loud surf on breathless strand,

The shallow nature fierce, yet gay,
Of our dark brethren; thou didst learn,
Noting—but gazing, far away,
With eyes that still would yearn,

For that fair time when, toil being done,
The happy day at length should come,
When with our kindly autumn sun
Thou should'st revisit home.

* * * *

It was this very year; and then
The plague, which long time, dealing death,
Had vexed the shores of kindred men,
On those breathed deadly breath.

And one, I know not who, their guest,
Sickening, Love drew them forth to tend,
Careless of needful food and rest,
Their fever-stricken friend,

Who owed to them life's refluent power;
While for those duteous martyrs twain,
Brother and Sister, one blest hour
Brought one release from pain.

Too generous natures! kindred souls!—
And now, round those twin tombs the wave,
Forgetful of their story, rolls,
And the palms shade their grave.

* * * *

And we—what shall we say of thee?—
Thou hast thy due reward, oh, friend—
We serve a High Necessity,
To an Invisible End.

That waste nor halting comes at all
In all the scheme is all we know;
The force was formed that bade thee fall,
Millions of years ago.

The clouds of circumstance unite,
The winds of fate together roll;
They meet; there bursts a sudden light,
And consecrates a soul!

IT SHALL BE WELL.

If thou shalt be in heart a child,
Forgiving, tender, meek, and mild,
Though with light stains of earth defiled,
Oh, soul, it shall be well.

It shall be well with thee indeed,
Whate'er thy race, thy tongue, thy creed;
Thou shalt not lose thy fitting meed.
It shall be surely well.

Not where, nor how, nor when we know,
Nor by what stages thou shalt grow;
We may but whisper faint and low,
"It shall be surely well."

It shall be well with thee, oh, soul,
Tho' the heavens wither like a scroll;
Tho' sun and moon forget to roll,
Oh, soul, it shall be well.

A REMONSTRANCE.

If ever, for a passing day,
My careless rhymes shall gain to please,
I would that those who read may say,
"Left he no more than these?"

For sure it is a piteous thing
That those blest souls to whom is given
The instinct and the power to sing,
The choicest gift of heaven,

Not from high peak to peak alone
Our faithful footsteps care to guide,
But oft by plains of sand and stone,
Dull wastes, and naught beside.

Who the low crawling verse prolong,
Careless alike of fame and time;
The form, but not the soul of song—
A dreary hum of rhyme.

A straight road, by a stagnant stream,
Where the winged steed, which late would soar
From the white summits like a dream,
Creeps slowly evermore.

A babble of sound, like that flat noise
Which, when the harmonies grow dumb,
Between the symphony's awful joys,
Too oft is heard to come.

Grave error; since not all of life
Is rhythmic; oft by level ways
We walk; the sweet creative strife,
The inspired heroic days,

Are rare for all,—no food for song,
Are common hours; and those who hold
The gift, the inspiration strong,
More precious far than gold,

Only when heart is fired and brain,
And the soul spreads its soaring wing,
Only when nobler themes constrain,
Should ever dare to sing.

THIRD SERIES (1875).

SONG.

TELL me where I may quench the too fierce fire
Of hope and of desire;
Tell me how I may from my soul remove
The sting and pain of love;
Tell me, and I will give to thee,
Magician, my whole soul in fee.

And yet I know not what of fit reward,
For enterprise so hard,
I might convey thee in a loveless soul,
Whose currents no more roll:
A corpse, corruptible and cold,
Were no great prize to have and hold.

Time only is it that will deign to take
Such things for their own sake,
Preferring age to youth, grey hairs to brown,
And to bright smiles the frown.
Time takes the hope, Time dulls the smart,
And first makes slow, then stops the heart.

Wherefore to Time I will address my song.
Time, equable and strong,
Take thou all hope and longing clean away—
And yet I prithee stay;
Forbear, for rather I would be
Consumed than turn to ice with thee.

THE HOME ALTAR.

WHY should we seek at all to gain
By vigils, and in pain,
By lonely life and empty heart,
To set a soul apart
Within a cloistered cell,
For whom the precious, homely hearth
would serve as well?

There, with the early breaking
morn,
Ere quite the day is born,
The lustral waters flow serene,
And each again grows clean;
From sleep, as from a tomb,
Born to another dawn of joy, and hope,
and doom.

There through the sweet and toil-
some day,
To labour is to pray;
There love with kindly beaming
eyes
Prepares the sacrifice;
And voice and innocent smile
Of childhood do our cheerful liturgies
beguile.

There, at his chaste and frugal
feast,
Love sitteth as a Priest;
And with mild eyes and mien
sedate,
His deacons stand and wait;
And round the holy table
Paten and chalice range in order
serviceable.

And when ere night, the vespers
said,
Low lies each weary head,
What giveth He who gives them
sleep,
But a brief death less deep?
Or what the fair dreams given
But ours who, daily dying, dream a
happier heaven?

Then not within a cloistered wall
Will we expend our days;
But dawns that break and eves
that fall
Shall bring their dues of praise.
This best befits a Ruler always
near,
This duteous worship mild, and reason-
able fear.

THE VOYAGE.

WHO climbs the Equatorial main
Drives on long time through mist and
cloud,
Through zones of storm, through thun-
ders loud,
For many a night of fear and pain.

Till one night all is clear, and lo!
He sees with wondering, awe-struck
eyes,
In depths above, in depths below,
Strange constellations light the skies—

New stars, more splendid and more fair,
Yet not without a secret loss:
He seeks in vain the Northern Bear,
And finds instead the Southern Cross.

Yet dawns the self-same sun—the same
The deep below the keel which lies;
Though this may burn with brighter
flame,
And that respond to bluer skies,

The self-same earth, the self-same sky:
And though through clouds and tempests driven,
The self-same seeker lifts an eye
That sees another side of heaven.

No change in man, or earth, or aught,
Save those strange secrets of the night;
Nor there, save that another thought
Has reached them through another sight,

Which may but know one hemisphere,
The earth's mass blotting out the blue,
Till one day, leaving shadows here,
It sees all heaven before its view.

THE FOOD OF SONG.

How best doth vision come
To the poet's mind,—
Lonely beneath the blue, unclouded dome,
Or battling with the mighty ocean-wind;
In fair spring mornings, with the soaring lark,
Or amid roaring midnight forests dark?

Shall he attune his voice
To sweetest song,
When earth and sea and sky alike rejoice,
And men are blest, and think no thought of wrong,
In some ideal heaven, some happy isle,
Where life is stiffened to a changeless smile?

Or best amid the noise
Of high designs,
Loud onsets, shatterings, awful battle joys,
Wherefor the loftier spirit longs and pines;
Or by the depths of Thought's unfathomed sea;
Or to loud thunders of the Dawn to be?

Nature is less than naught
In smile or frown,
But for the formless, underlying thought
Of mind and purpose greater than our own;
This only can these empty shows inform,
Smiles through the calm, and animates the storm.

Nor 'mid the clang and rush
Of mightier thought,
The steeps, the snows, the gulfs, that whelm and crush
The seeker with the treasure he has sought;
Too vast, too swift, too formless to inspire
The fictive hand, or touch the lips with fire.

Rather amid the throng
Of toiling men
He finds the food and sustenance of song,
Spread by hidden hands, again, and yet again,
Where'er he goes, by crowded city street,
He fares thro' springing fancies sad and sweet—

Some innocent baby smile;
A close-wound waist;
Fathers and children; things of shame and guile;
Dim eyes, and lips at parting kissed in haste;

The halt, the blind, the prosperous thing of ill;
The thief, the wanton, touch and vex him still.

Or if sometimes he turn
With a new thrill,
And strives to paint anew with words that burn
The inner thought of sea, or sky, or hill:
It is because a breath of human life
Has touched them: joy and suffering, rest and strife.

And he sees mysteries
Above, around,
Fair spiritual fleeting agencies
Haunting each foot of consecrated ground:
And so, these fading, raises bolder eyes
Beyond the furthest limits of the skies,

And every thought and word,
And all things seen,
And every passion which his heart has stirred,
And every joy and sorrow which has been,
And every step of life his feet have trod,
Lead by broad stairs of glory up to God.

THE YOUTH OF THOUGHT.

Oh happy days! oh joyous time!
When thought was gay and man was young,
And to a golden flow of rhyme,
Life like a melody was sung;

When, in the springtime of the earth,
The cloud-capt hill, the dewy grove,
Clear lake and rippling stream gave birth
To shy Divinities of love;

When often to the jovial feast
Of love or wine the people came,
And Nature was the only priest,
And Youth and Pleasure knew not shame.

Nor darker shape of wrong or ill
The fearful fancy might inspire,
Than vine-crowned on some shady hill,
The Satyr nursing quaint desire.

And if some blooming youth or maid
In depths of wood or stream were lost,
Some love-lorn Deity, 'twas said,
The blissful truant's path had crossed.

Sweet time of fancy, giving place
To times of thinking scarce less blest,
When Wisdom wore a smiling face,
And Knowledge was like Fancy drest,

And Art with Language lived ingrown,
The cunning hand and golden tongue:
By this the form Divine was shown,
By that its deathless praises sung.

When in cool temples fair and white,
By purple sea, or myrtle shade,
The gods took shape to mortal sight,
By their own creatures' hands remade.

And daily, to the cheerful noise
Of wrestling, or the panting race—
Mid the clear laughter of the boys,
And tender forms of youthful grace—

Grave sages walked in high debate
Beneath the laurel grove, and sought
To solve the mysteries of Fate,
And sound the lowest deeps of Thought;

Nor knew that they, as those indeed,
Were naked, taking fair for right;
With beauty only for all creed,
Yet not without some heaven-sent light.

Now preaching clear the deathless soul;
Now winging love from sloughs of shame;
And oft from earthly vapours foul,
Soaring aloft with tongues of flame.

Knew they no inward voice to vex
The careless joyance of their way—
No pointing finger stern, which checks
The sad transgressor of to-day?

Fair dream, if any dream be fair,
Which knows no fuller life than thine;
Which only moves through earthly air,
And builds on shadows half divine;

How art thou fled! For us no more
Dryad or Satyr haunts the grove;
No Nereid sports upon the shore,
Nor with wreathed horn the Tritons rove;

Who breathe a fuller, graver air,
Long since to manhood's stature grown;
Who leave our childhood's fancies fair,
For pains and pleasures of our own.

For us no more the young vine climbs,
Its gadding tendrils flinging down;
Who move in sadder, wiser times,
Whose thorns are woven for a crown.

The lily and the passion-flower
Preach a new tale of gain and loss,
And in the wood-nymph's closest bower
The springing branches form the Cross.

"A great hope traversing the earth,"
Has taken all the young world's bloom,
And for the joy and flush of birth,
Has left the solemn thought of doom;

And made the body no more divine,
And built our Heaven no longer here,
And given for joyous fancies fine,
Souls bowed with holy awe and fear.

And far beyond the suns, removed
The godhead seen by younger eyes,
Leaving the people once beloved,
Girt round by dreadful mysteries;

Fulfilled with thoughts, more fair and dear
Than all the lighter joys of yore,
Immeasurable hopes brought near,
And Heaven laid open more and more.

But not with love and peace alone
Time came, which older joys could take;

But with fierce brand and hopeless groan,
Red war, the dungeon, and the stake;

And lives by Heaven too much opprest,
And cloisters dim with tears and sighs,
And young hearts withered in the breast,
And fasts and stripes and agonies;

And for Apollo breathing strength,
And Aphrodité warm with life;
A tortured Martyr come at length,
To the last pang of lifelong strife.

While round us daily move no more
Those perfect forms of youthful grace,
No more men worship as before
The rounded limb, the clear-cut face;

Who see the dwarfed mechanic creep,
With hollow cheek, and lungs that bleed,
Or the swart savage fathom-deep,
Who comes to air, to sleep, and breed.

Aye, but by loom, or forge, or mine,
Or squalid hut, there breaks for these
Hope more immense, awe more divine
Than ever dawned on Sokrates.

Who if they seek to live again
In careless lives the pagan charm,
May only prove a lifelong pain,
For that clear conscience void of harm.

For in the manhood of God's days
We live, and not in careless youth;
The essence more than form we praise,
And Beauty moves us less than Truth.

From youth to age; till cycles hence
Another and a higher Spring,
And with a truer innocence,
Again the world shall think and sing.

SONG.

I WOULD thou might'st not vex me with thine eyes,
Thou fair Ideal Beauty, nor would'st shame
All lower thoughts and visions as they rise,
As in mid-noon a flame.

For now thy presence leaves no prospect fair,
Nor joy in act, nor charm in any maid,
Nor end to be desired, for which men dare,
Thou making me afraid.

Because life seems through thee a thing too great
To spend on these, which else might grow to thee;
So that fast bound, I idly hesitate;
I prithee set me free;

Or, hold me, if thou wilt, but come not near,
Let me pursue thee still in ghostly grace;
Far off let me pursue thee, for I fear
To faint before thy face.

AT CHAMBERS.

To the chamber, where now uncaring
I sit apart from the strife,
While the fool and the knave are sharing
The pleasures and profits of life,

There came a faint knock at the door,
Not long since on a terrible day;
One faint little knock, and no more;
And I brushed the loose papers away.

And as no one made answer, I rose,
With quick step and impatience of look,
And a glance of the eye which froze,
And a ready voice of rebuke.

But when the door opened, behold!
A mother, low-voiced and mild,
Whose thin shawl and weak arms enfold
A pale little two-year-old child.

What brought her there? Would I relieve her?
Was all the poor mother could say;
For her child, scarce recovered from fever,
Left the hospital only that day.

Pale, indeed, was the child; yet so cheerful,
That, seeing me wonder, she said,
Of doubt and repulse, grown fearful,
"Please look at his dear little head;"

And snatched off the little bonnet,
And so in a moment laid bare
A shorn little head, and upon it
No trace of the newly-come hair.

When, seeing the stranger's eye
Grow soft; of an innocent guile
The child looked up, shrinking and shy,
With the ghost of a baby smile.

Poor child! I thought, so soon come
To the knowledge of lives oppressed,
To whom poverty comes with home,
And sickness brings food and rest:

Who art launched forth, a frail little boat,
In the midst of life's turbulent sea,
To sink, it may be, or to float
On great waves that care nothing for thee.

What awaits thee? An early peace
In the depths of a little grave,
Or, despite all thy ills to increase,
Through some dark chance, mighty to save;

Till in stalwart manhood you meet
The strong man, who regards you to-day,
Crawling slowly along the street,
In old age withered and gray?

Who knows? But the thoughts I have told
In one instant flashed through my brain,
As the poor mother, careful of cold,
Clasped her infant to her again.

And I, if I searched for my purse,
Was I selfish, say you, and wrong?
Surely silver is wasted worse
Than in earning the right to a song!

EVENSONG.

THE hymns and the prayers were done, and the village church was still,
As I lay in a waking dream in the churchyard upon the hill.

The graves were all around, and the dark yews over my head,
And below me the winding stream and the exquisite valley were spread.

The sun was sloping down with a glory of dying rays,
And the hills were bathed in gold, and the woods were vocal with praise.

But from the deep-set valley there rose a vapour of grey,
And the sweet day sank, and the glory waxed fainter and faded away.

Then there came, like a chilling wind, a cold, low whisper of doubt,
Which silenced the echo of hymns, and blotted the glories out.

And I wrestled with powers unseen, and strove with a Teacher divine,
Like Jacob who strove with the angel, and found with the dawn a sign.

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For I thought of the words they sang: "It is He that hath made us indeed";
And my thought flew back to the Fathers of thought and their atheist creed—

How atom with atom at first fortuitously combined,
Formed all, from the worlds without to the innermost worlds of mind;

And I thought: What, if this be true, and no Maker there is indeed,
And God is the symbol alone of a feeble and worn-out creed;

And from uncreate atoms, impelled by a blind chance driving on free,
Grew together the primal forms of all essences that be!

Then a voice: If they were, indeed, they were separate one from one
By a gulph as broad as yawns in space betwixt sun and sun—

Self-centred and self-contained, disenvironed and isolate;
Drawn together by a hidden love, torn apart by a hidden hate.

What power was this—chance, will you say? But chance, what else can it mean
Than the hidden Cause of things by human reason unseen?

Chance! Then Chance were a name for God, or each atom bearing a soul
Indivisible, like with like, part and whole of the Infinite Whole.

Were God, as the Pantheist taught, God in earth, and in sky, and in air,
God through every thought and thing, and made manifest everywhere;

The spring and movement of things—the stir, the breathing of breath,
Without which all things were quenched in the calm of an infinite death;

Or, if within each there lay some germ of an unborn power,
God planted it first, God quickened, God raised it from seed to flower.

Though beneath the weird cosmical force, which we wield and yet cannot name,
From the germ or the rock we draw out low gleams of life's faintest flame;

Though we lose the will that commands, and the muscles that wait and serve,
In some haze of a self-set spring of the molecules of nerve;

Though we sink all spirit in matter, and let the Theogonies die,
Life and death are; thinker and thought; outward, inward; I, and not I,
And the I is the Giver of life, and without it the matter must die.

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Then I ceased for a while from thought, as I lay on the long green grass,
Hearing echoes of hymns anew, and letting the moments pass.

The evening was mounting upward; the sunbeams had left the hill;
But the dying daylight lingered, and all the valley was still.

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Then I said: But if God there be, how shall man by his thinking find,
Who is only a finite creature, the depths of the Infinite Mind—

Who sounds with a tiny plummet, who scans with a purblind eye,
The depths of that fathomless ocean, the wastes of that limitless sky?

Shall we bow to a fetish, a symbol, which maybe nor sees nor hears;
Or, seeing and hearing indeed, takes no thought for our hopes or fears;

Who is dumb, though we long for a word; who is deaf, though his children cry;
Who is Master, yet bears with evil—Lord, and lets all precious things die?

Or if in despair we turn from the godless and meaningless plan,
What do we, but make for ourselves a God in the image of man—

A creature of love and hate, a creature who makes for good,
But barred by an evil master from working the things that he would?

If he be not a reflex image, we may not know him at all ;
If he be, we are God ourselves—to ourselves we shall stand or fall.

Then the voice : But what folly is this ! Cannot God indeed be known,
If we know not the hidden essence that forms Him and builds His throne ?

Is all our knowledge naught, of sea, and of sky, and of star,
Till we know them, not as they seem to our thinking, but as they are ?

We who build the whole fabric of knowledge on vague abstractions sublime ;
We who whirl through an infinite space, and live in an infinite time ;

We who prate of Motion and Force, not knowing that on either side
Black gulphs unavoidable yawn, dark riddles our thought deride ;

Shall we hold our science as naught in all things of earth, because
We know but the seemings and shows, the relations, and not the cause—

Not only as he who admires the rainbow and cloud of gold,
Knows that 'tis but a form of vapour his wondering eyes behold ;

But as he who sees and knows, and knowing would fain ignore
What he knows since the essence of things is hid, and he knows not more—

Or who would not love his love, or walk hand in hand with his friend,
Since he sees not the roots of the tree from whose branches life's blossoms depend ?

Or how should the sight we see, any more than the sound we hear,
Be a thing which exists for our thought, apart from the eye or the ear ;

Is not every atom of dust, which compacted we call the earth,
A miracle baffling our thought with insoluble wonders of birth ?

And know we not, indeed, that the matter which men have taught,
Is itself an essence unseen and untouched—but by spirit and thought ?

Tush ! It is but a brain-sick dream. What was it that taught us the laws
Which stand as a bar between us and the thought of the Infinite Cause ?

Is He infinite, out of relation, and absolute, past finding out ?
Reach we not an antinomy here ? feel we here no striving of doubt ?

How, then, shall the finite define the bounds of the infinite plan,
This is finite, and infinite this : here is Deity, here is man.

If our judgment be relative only, how then shall our brain transcend
The limits of relative thought ; grown too eager to comprehend ?

For he passes the bounds of relation, if any there be who can
Distinguish the absolute God from the relative in man :

He has bridged the gulph ; he has leaped o'er the bound ; he has seen with his eyes
For a moment the land unseen, that beyond the mountain peaks lies.

Nay ! we see but a part of God, since we gaze with a finite sight ;
And yet not Darkness is He, but a blinding splendour of light.

Do we shrink from this light, and let our dazzled eyeballs fall ?
Nay ! a God fully known or utterly dark, were not God at all.

Though we hold not that in some sphere which our thought may never conceive,
There comes not a time when, to know may be all, and not, to believe ;

Nor yet that the right which we love, and the wrong which we hate to-day,
May not show as reversed, or as one, when the finite has passed away ;

God we know in our image indeed, since we are in the image of Him,
Of His splendour a faint low gleam, of His glory a reflex dim.

Bowing not to the all unknown, nor to that which is searched out quite ;
But to That which is known, yet unknown—to the darkness that comes of light,
To the contact of God with man, to the struggle and triumph of right.

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Then I ceased for a while from thought, as I lay on the long green grass,
Hearing echoes of hymns grown nearer, and letting the moments pass.

Exult, oh dust and ashes ! the low voices seemed to say ;
And then came a sudden hush, and the jubilance faded away.

The evening was dying now, and the moon-rise was on the hill,
And the soft light touched the river, and all the valley was still.

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Then I thought : But if God there be, and our thought may reach Him indeed,
How should this bare knowledge alone stand in lieu of a fuller creed ?

If He be and is good, as they say, how yet can our judgment approve,
'Mid the rule of His iron laws, the place of His infinite love?

The rocks are built up of death, earth and sea teem with ravin and wrong;
The sole law in Nature we learn, is the law that strengthens the strong.

Through countless ages of time, the Lord has withdrawn Him apart
From all the world He has made, save the world of the human heart.

Without and within all is pain, from the cry of the child at birth,
To its parting sigh in age, when it looks for a happier earth.

Should you plead that God's order goes forth with a measured footstep sublime,
Know you not that you thrust Him back thus to the first beginnings of time,—

That a spark, a moment, a flash, and His work was over and done;
And the worlds were sent forth for ever, each circling around its sun.

Bearing with it all secrets of being, all potencies undefined,
All forms and changes of matter, all growths and achievements of mind.

What is there for our worship in this, and should not our reason say,
He is, and made us indeed, but hides Him too far away?

Though He lives, yet is He as one dead; and we, who would prostrate fall
Before the light of His Presence, we see not nor know Him at all.

Then the voice: Oh folly of doubt! what is time that we deem so far,
What else but a multiple vast of the little lives that are?

He who lives for the fifty years, which scarce rear thought to its prime,
Already a measure has lived of a thousand years of time.

Twice this, and Christ spoke not yet, and from this what a span appears,
The space till our thought is lost in the mists of a million years!

A thousand millions of years—we have leapt with a thought, with a word;
To the time when no flutter of life 'neath the shield of the trilobite stirred.

All time is too brief for our thought, and yet we would bring God nigh,
Till He worked in His creature's sight, man standing undazzled by.

Such a God were not God indeed ; nor, if He should change at all,
Should we hold, as we hold Him now, the God of both great and small.

How know we the great things from small? how mark we the adequate cause,
Which might make the Creator impede the march of His perfect laws,—

We, who know but a part, not the whole? Or were it a fitting thought
He should stoop in our sight to amend the errors His hand had wrought,

So His laws were not perfect at all? or should He amend them indeed,
How supply by a fitful caprice the want of a normal creed?

All life is a mode of force, and all force that is force must move ;
'Tis a friction of Outward and Inward, a contrast of Hatred and Love.

Joy and Grief, Right and Wrong, Life and Death, Finite, Infinite, Matter and Will,
These are the twin wheels of the Chariot of Life, which without them stood still.

Would you seek in an order reversed and amended a Hand divine?
Nay the Wonder of wonders lies in unchangeable design.

Should God break His law as He might ; should He stoop from His infinite skies
To redress that which seems to us wrong, to raise up the life that dies ;

Should He save from His wolf His lamb, from His tiger His innocent child ;
Should He quench the fierce flames, or still the great waves clamouring wild,

I think a great cry would go up from an orderless Universe,
And all the fair fabric of things would wither, as under a curse.

'Tis the God of the savage, is this. What do we who rise by degrees
To the gift of the mind that perceives, and the gift of the eye that sees?

Does not all our nature tend to a law of unbending rule,
Till equity comes but to mend the law that was made by the fool?

Who shows highest?—the child or the savage, whose smiles change to rage or to tears?
Or the statesman moving, unmoved, through a nation's desires and fears?

Or the pilgrim whose eyes look onward, as if to a distant home,
Never turning aside from his path, whatever allurements may come?

All Higher is more Unmoved; and the more unbroken the law,
The more sure does the Giver show to the eyes of a wondering awe.

Nor is it with all of truth that they make their voices complain,
Who weary our thought with tales of a constant ruin and pain.

It is but a brain-sick dream that would gloat o'er the hopeless bed,
Or the wreck, or the crash, or the fight, with their tales of the dying and dead.

Pain comes; hopeless pain, God knows and we know, again and again;
But even pain has its intervals blest, when 'tis heaven to be free from pain.

And I think that the wretch who lies pressed by a load of incurable ill,
With a grave pity pities himself, but would choose to have lived to it still;

And, as he whom the tiger bears in his jaws to his blood-stained den
Feels no pain nor fear, but a wonder, what comes in the wonderful "Then,"

He pities himself and yet knows, as he casts up life's chequered sum,
It were best on the whole to have lived, whatever calamity come.

And the earth is full of joy. Every blade of grass that springs;
Every cool worm that crawls content as the eagle on soaring wings;

Every summer day instinct with life; every dawn when from waking bird
And morning hum of the bee, a chorus of praise is heard;

Every gnat that sports in the sun for his little life of a day;
Every flower that opens its cup to the dews of a perfumed May;

Every child that wakes with a smile, and sings to the ceiling at dawn;
Every bosom which knows a new hope stir beneath its virginal lawn;

Every young soul, ardent and high, rushing forth into life's hot fight;
Every home of happy content, lit by love's own mystical light;

Every worker who works till the evening, and earns before night his wage,
Be his work a furrow straight-drawn, or the joy of a bettered age;

Every thinker who, standing aloof from the throng, finds a high delight
In striking with tongue or with pen a stroke for the triumph of right;—

All these know that life is sweet; all these, with a consonant voice,
Read the legend of Time with a smile, and that which they read is, "Rejoice!"

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Then again I ceased from thought, as I lay on the long green grass,
Hearing hymns which grew fuller and fuller, and letting the moments pass.

Exult, oh dust and ashes! exult and rejoice! they said,
For blessed are they who live, and blessed are they who are dead.

Then again they ceased and were still, and my thought began once more,
But touched with a silvery gleam of hopes that were hidden before;

The moon had climbed up the clear sky, far above the black pines on the hill,
And the river ran molten silver, and all the valley was still.

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Then I said: But if God there be, who made us indeed and is good,
What guide has He left for our feet to walk in the ways that He would?

For though He should speak indeed, yet, as soon as His voice grew dumb,
It were only through human speech that the message it bore might come,

Sunk to levels of human thought, and always marred and confined
By the chain of a halting tongue, and the curse of a finite mind;

So that he who would learn, indeed, what precepts His will has taught,
Must dim with a secular learning the brightness his soul has sought.

Who can tell how those scattered leaves through gradual ages grew,
Adding chaff and dust from the world to the accents simple and true?

If one might from the seer's wild visions, or stories of fraud and blood,
Or lore of the world-worn Sultan, discern the sure voice of good,

Such a mind were a God to itself; or if you should answer, For each
God has set a sure mentor within, with power to convince and teach;

Yet it speaks with a changeful voice, which alters with race and clime,
Nay, even in the self-same lands is changed with the changes of time;

So that 'twixt the old Europe of story and that which we know to-day,
Yawns a gulph, as wide almost as parts us from far Cathay;

What power has such voice to help us? Or if we should turn instead
To the precious dissonant pages, which keep what the Teacher said;

How reduce them to one indeed, or how seek in vain to ignore
The forgotten teachers who taught His counsels of mercy before?

Not "an eye for an eye" alone, was the rule which they loved to teach,
But Mercy, and Pity, and Love, though they spoke with a halting speech,

And He spake with the tongue of those who had spoken and then were dumb,
And clothed in the words of the Law, which He loved, would His precepts come;

Other teachers have drawn more millions, who follow more faithful than we;
Other teachers have taught a rule as stern and unselfish as He.

If we shrink from the Caliph fierce, who carved out a faith with his sword,
What say we of the pilgrim who sways the old East with his gentle word?

Or what of the sage whose vague thoughts, over populous wastes of earth,
Have led millions of fettered feet to the grave from the day of birth?

Or how can we part indeed, the show, the portent, the sign,
From the simple words which glow with the light of a teaching Divine?

And if careless of these, as of growths which spring up and bear fruit and fall,
Yet how shall our thought accept the crowning wonder of all?

Yet if this we reject, wherein, doth our faith and assurance lie?
What is it to us that God lives, we who live for a little and die;

Or why were it not more wise to live as the beasts of to-day,
Taking life, while it lasts, as a gift, and secure of the future as they?

Then the voice: Oh, disease of doubt! now I seem to hold you indeed,
Keeping fast in my grasp at length the sum of your dreary creed.

How else should man prove God's will, than through methods of human thought?
How else than through human words should he gather the things that he ought?

If the Lord should speak day by day from Sinai, mid clouds and fire,
Should we hear 'mid those thunders loud the still voices which now inspire?

Would not either that awful sound, like that vivid and scorching blaze,
Confuse our struggling thought, and our tottering footsteps amaze?

Or, if it should peal so clear that to hear were to obey indeed,
'Twere a thing of dry knowledge alone, not one of a faithful creed;

No lantern for erring feet, but a glare on a white, straight road,
Where life struggled its weary day, to sink before night with its load;

Where the blinded soul might long for the shade of a cloud of doubt,
And yearn for dead silence, to blot that terrible utterance out.

Yet God is not silent indeed; not seldom from every page—
From the lisping story of eld to the seer with his noble rage;

From the simple life divine, with its accents gentle and true,
To the thinker who formed by his learning and watered the faith as it grew;

All are fired by the Spirit of God. Nor true is the doubt you teach,
That God speaks not to all men the same, but differs 'twixt each and each.

Each differs from each a little, with difference of race and of clime;
Each is changed, but not transformed, with the onward process of time;

Each nation, each age, has its laws, whereto it shall stand or fall,
But built on a wider Law, which is under and over them all.

Nor doubt we that from Western wilds to the long-sealed isles of Japan,
There runs the unbroken realm of a Law that is common to man.

Not as ours shows the law they obey, and yet it is one and the same,
Though it comes in a varying shape, and is named by another name.

Not so shall your doubt prevail; nor if any should dream to-day,
By praise of Jew or of Greek, to dissolve His glory away,

Can they hold that God left His world with no gleam of glory from Him,
No light clouds edged with splendour, no radiance of Godhead dim.

Others were before Christ had come. Oh! dear dead Teacher, whose word,
Long before the sweet voice on the Hill, young hearts had quickened and stirred;

Who spak'st of the soul and the life; with limbs chilled by the rising death,
Yielding up to thy faith, with a smile, the last gasp of thy earthly breath;—

And thou, oh golden-mouthed sage, who with brilliance of thought as of tongue,
Didst sing of thy Commonwealth fair, the noblest of epics unsung;

In whose pages thy Master's words shine forth, sublimed and refined
In the music of perfect language, inspired by a faithful mind;—

And ye seers of Israel and doctors, whose breath was breathed forth to move
The dry dead bones of the Law with the life of a larger love;—

Or thou, great Saint of the East, in whose footsteps the millions have trod
Till from life, like an innocent dream, they pass'd and were lost in God;—

And thou, quaint teacher of old, whose dead words, though all life be gone,
Through the peaceful Atheist realms keep the millions labouring on;—

Shall I hold that ye, as the rest, spake no echo of things divine,
That no gleam of a clouded sun through the mists of your teaching may shine?

Nay; such thoughts were to doubt of God. Yet, strange it is and yet sure,
No teacher of old was full of mercy as ours, or pure.

'Twixt the love that He taught, and the Greek with his nameless, terrible love,
Yawns a gulph as wide as parts hell beneath and heaven above;

'Twixt His rule of a Higher Mercy and that which the Rabbi taught,
Lies the gulph between glowing Act and barren ashes of Thought.

For the pure thought smirched and fouled, or buried in pedant lore,
He brought a sweet Reason of Force, such as man knew never before.

What to us are the men of the East, though they preach their own Gospel indeed?
We are men of the West, and shall stand or fall by a Western creed.

Though we see in those Scriptures antique, faint flames of Diviner fire,
Who would change to Buddha from Christ, as a change from lower to higher?

Nay! He is our Teacher indeed. Little boots it to-day to seek
To arraign, with a laboured learning, the words that men heard Him speak;

To cavil, to carp, to strive, through the mists of an age-long haze,
To dim to a common light the star which could once amaze;

To fix by some pigmy canon, too short for the tale of to-day,
The facts of a brief life, fled eighteen centuries away;

To mark by a guess, and to spurn, as born of a later age,
The proofs which, whenever writ, bear God's finger on every page;

Or to sneer at the wonders they saw Him work, or believed they saw;
We who know that unbending sequence is only a phase of law,

No wonder which God might do if it rested on witness of men,
Would turn to it our thought of to-day as it turned the multitudes then.

Nor proved would avail a whit if the teaching itself were not pure;
Nor if it were pure as His would make it one whit more sure.

And for the great Wonder of all. If any there be who fears
That the spark of God in his breast may be quenched in a few short years;

Who feels his faith's fire blaze aloft more clear than it burnt before,
By the thought of the empty tomb and the stone rolled back from the door:

For him was the miracle done. If no proof makes clearer to me
Than His word to my inner sense, the Higher life that shall be;

If no Force that has once leapt forth can ever decline and fall,
From the dead forces stirring the worlds, to the Life-force which dominates all;

But the sum of life is the same, and shall be when the world is done,
As it was when its first faint spark was stirred by the kiss of the sun;-

If I feel a sure knowledge within, which shall never be blotted out,
A Longing, a Faith, a Conviction, too strong for a Whisper of Doubt

That my life shall be hid with a Lord, who shall do the thing that is best—
To be purged, it may be, long time, or taken at once to rest,—

To live, it may be, myself; from all else, individual, sole,
Or blended with other lives, or sunk in the Infinite whole—

Though I doubt not that that which is I may endure in the ages to be,
Since I know not what bars hold apart the Not-Me and the mystical Me;—

How else than thro' Him do I grasp the faith that for Greek and Jew
Was hidden, or but dimly seen, which nor Moses nor Sokrates knew?

Ay! He is our Teacher indeed. He is risen, and we shall rise;
But if only as we He rose, not the less He lives in the skies.

And if those who proclaim Him to day in the dim gray lands of the East,
Prove him not by portent or sign, not by trick or secret of priest;

But for old cosmogonies dead, and faint precepts too weak for our need,
Offer God brought nearer to man in a living and glowing creed.

The pure teaching, the passionate love, taking thought for the humble and weak,
The pitiful scorn of wrong, which His Scriptures everywhere speak,

Not writ for the sage in his cell, but preached 'mid the turmoil and strife,
And touched with a living brand from the fire of the Altar of Life.

So, of all the wonders they tell, no wonder our hearts has stirred
Like the Wonder which lives with us still in a living and breathing Word.

More than portents, more than all splendours of rank loyal hearts devise,
More than visions of heavenly forms caught up and lost in the skies,

This the crowning miracle shows, before which we must prostrate fall;
For this is the living voice of the Lord and Giver of all.

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Then I ceased again from thought, as I lay on the long grave-grass,
Thrilled through by a music of hymns, and letting the moments pass.

"Exult and rejoice"! they sang in high unison, now combined
Which were warring voices before, the voices of heart and mind.

The earth was flooded with light, over valley and river and hill,
And this is the hymn which I heard them sing, while the world lay still:

"Exult, oh dust and ashes! Rejoice, all ye that are dead!
For ye live too who lie beneath, as we live who walk overhead.

As God lives, so ye are living; ye are living and moving to-day,
Not as they live who breathe and move, yet living and conscious as they.

And ye too, oh living, exult. Young and old, exult and rejoice;
For the Lord of the quick and the dead lives for ever: we hear His voice.

We have heard His voice, and we hear it sound wider and more increased,
To the sunset plains of the West from the peaks of the furthest East.

For the quick and the dead, it was given; for them it is sounding still,
And no pause of silence arrests the clear voice of the Infinite Will.

Not only through Christ long since, and the teachers of ages gone,
But to-day He speaks, day by day, to those who are toiling on;

More clear perhaps then, to the ear, and with nigher voice and more plain,
But still the same Teacher Divine, speaking to us again and again.

For I like not his creed, if any there be, who shall dare to hold
That God comes to us only at times far away in the centuries old.

Not so; but He dwells with us still; and maybe, though I know not indeed,
He will send us a Christ again, with a fuller and perfecter creed—

A Christ who shall speak to all men, East and West, and North and South,
Till the whole world shall hear and believe the gracious words of His mouth.

When knowledge has pierced through the wastes, chaining earth together and sea,
And the bars of to-day are lost in the union of all that shall be;

And the brotherhood that He loved is more than a saintly thought,
And the wars and the strifes which we mourn are lost in the peace He taught;

Then Christ coming shall make all things new. Or it may be that ages of pain
Shall quench the dim light of to-day, bringing back the thick darkness again.

And then, slow as the tide which flows on though each wave may seem to recede,
Man advances again and again to the Rock of a higher creed.

Or it may be no teacher shall come down again with God in his face,
But the light which before was reflected from One shall shine on the race.

And as this wide earth grows smaller, and men to men nearer draw,
There may spring from the root of the race the flower of a nobler law,

Growing fairer, and still more fair; or maybe, through long ages of time,
Man shall rise up from type to type, to the strength of an essence sublime,

Removed as far in knowledge, in length of life, and in good
From us, as we from the mollusc which gasped in the first warm flood,—

A creature so wise and so high that he scorns all allurement of ill,
Marching on through an ordered life in the strength of a steadfast will.

Who knows? But, however it be, we live, and shall live indeed,
In ourselves or in others to come. What more doth our longing need?

Hid with God, or on earth, we shall see, burning brighter and yet more bright,
The sphere of humanity move throughout time on its pathway of light;

Circling round with a narrower orbit, as age upon age fleets away,
The Centre of Force and of Being, the Fountain of Light and of Day,

Till, nearer drawn, and more near, at last it shall merge and fall
In its source; man is swallowed in God, the Part is lost in the All;

One more world is recalled to rest, one more star adds its fire to the sun,
One light less wanders thro' space, and the story of man is done!"

* * * * * *

Then slowly I rose to go from my place on the long grave-grass,
Where so long I had lain in deep thought, and letting the moments pass:

A great light was flooding the plains of the earth and the uttermost sky,
The low church and the deep-sunk vale, and the place where one day I shall lie,

The fresh graves of those we have lost, the dark yews with their reverend gloom,
And the green wave which only marks the place of the nameless tomb;

And thro' all the clear spaces above—oh wonder! oh glory of Light!—
Came forth myriads on myriads of worlds, the shining host of the night,—

The vast forces and fires that know the same sun and centre as we;
The faint planets which roll in vast orbits round suns we shall never see;

The rays which had sped from the first, with the awful swiftness of light,
To reach only then, it might be, the confines of mortal sight:

Oh, wonder of Cosmical Order! oh, Maker and Ruler of all,
Before whose Infinite greatness in silence we worship and fall!

Could I doubt that the Will which keeps this great Universe steadfast and sure
Might be less than His creatures thought, full of goodness, pitiful, pure?

Could I dream that the Power which keeps those great suns circling around,
Took no thought for the humblest life which flutters and falls to the ground?

"Oh, Faith! thou art higher than all." Then I turned from the glories above,
And from every casement new-lit there shone a soft radiance of love:

Young mothers were teaching their children to fold little hands in prayer;
Strong fathers were resting from toil, 'mid the hush of the Sabbath air;

Peasant lovers strolled thro' the lanes, shy and diffident, each with each,
Yet knit by some subtle union too fine for their halting speech:

Humble lives, to low thought, and low; but linked, to the thinker's eye,
By a bond that is stronger than death, with the lights of the ultimate sky:

Here as there, the great drama of life rolled on, and a jubilant voice
Thrilled through me ineffable, vast, and bade me exult and rejoice;

Exult and rejoice, oh soul! sang my being to a mystical hymn
As I passed by the cool bright wolds, as I threaded my pinewoods dim;

Rejoice and be sure! as I passed to my fair home under the hill,
Wrapt round with a happy content,—and the world and my soul were still!

SONG.

BEAM on me, fair Ideal, beam on me!
Too long thou hast concealed thee in a cloud;
Mine is no vision strong to pierce to thee,
Nor voice complaining loud,
Whereby thou mightest find thy dear, and come
To thine own heart, and long-expecting home.

Too long thou dost withdraw thee from mine eyes;
Too long thou lingerest. Ah, truant sweet!
Dost thou no reckoning take of all my sighs,
While Time with flying feet
Speeds onward, till the westering sun sinks low—
With cruel feet so swift and yet so slow?

Time was I thought that thou wouldst come a maid
White-armed, with deep blue eyes and sunny head;
But, ah! too long the lovely vision stayed.
And then, when this was fled,
Fame, with blown clarion clear, and wide-spread wings,
Fame, crown and summit of created things.

And then in guise of Truth, when this grew faint,
Truth in Belief and Act, and Life and Thought,
White-robed and virginal, a pure cold saint,
Thou cam'st awhile, long sought;
But only in glimpses camest thou, so I
Watch wearily until thou passest by.

I wait, I watch, I hunger, though I know
Thou wilt not come at all who stay'st so long.
My hope has lost its strength, my heart its glow;
I grow too cold for song:
Long since I might have sung, hadst thou come then,
A song to echo through the souls of men.

Yet, since 'tis better far to dream in sleep,
Than wholly lose the treacheries of time,
I hold it gain to have seen thy garments sweep
On the far hills sublime:
Still will I hope thy glorious face to see,—
Beam on me, fair Ideal, beam on me!

AT LAST.

LET me at last be laid
On that hillside I know which scans the vale,
Beneath the thick yews' shade,
For shelter when the rains and winds prevail.
It cannot be the eye
Is blinded when we die,
So that we know no more at all
The dawns increase, the evenings fall;
Shut up within a mouldering chest of wood
Asleep, and careless of our children's good.

Shall I not feel the spring,
The yearly resurrection of the earth,
Stir thro' each sleeping thing
With the fair throbbings and alarms of birth,
Calling at its own hour
On folded leaf and flower,
Calling the lamb, the lark, the bee,
Calling the crocus and anemone,
Calling new lustre to the maiden's eye,
And to the youth love and ambition high?

Shall I no more admire
The winding river kiss the daisied plain?
Nor see the dawn's cold fire
Steal downward from the rosy hills again?
Nor watch the frowning cloud,
Sublime with mutterings loud,
Burst on the vale, nor eves of gold,
Nor crescent moons, nor starlights cold,
Nor the red casements glimmer on the hill
At Yule-tides, when the frozen leas are still?

Or should my children's tread
Through Sabbath twilights, when the hymns are done,
Come softly overhead,
Shall no sweet quickening through my bosom run,
Till all my soul exhale
Into the primrose pale,
And every flower which springs above
Breathes a new perfume from my love;
And I shall throb, and stir, and thrill beneath
With a pure passion stronger far than death?

Sweet thought! fair, gracious dream,
Too fair and fleeting for our clearer view!
How should our reason deem
That those dear souls, who sleep beneath the blue
In rayless caverns dim,
'Mid ocean monsters grim,
Or whitening on the trackless sand,
Or with strange corpses on each hand
In battle-trench or city graveyard lie,
Break not their prison-bonds till time shall die?

Nay, 'tis not so indeed.
With the last fluttering of the failing breath
The clay-cold form doth breed
A viewless essence, far too fine for death;
And ere one voice can mourn,
On upward pinions borne,
They are hidden, they are hidden, in some thin air,
Far from corruption, far from care,
Where through a veil they view their former scene,
Only a little touched by what has been.
Touched but a little; and yet,
Conscious of every change that doth befal,
By constant change beset,
The creatures of this tiny whirling ball,
Filled with a higher being,
Dowered with a clearer seeing,
Risen to a vaster scheme of life,
To wider joys and nobler strife,
Viewing our little human hopes and fears
As we our children's fleeting smiles and tears.

Then, whether with fire they burn
This dwelling-house of mine when I am fled,
And in a marble urn
My ashes rest by my beloved dead,
Or in the sweet cold earth
I pass from death to birth,
And pay kind Nature's life-long debt
In heart's-ease and in violet—
In charnel-yard or hidden ocean wave,
Where'er I lie, I shall not scorn my grave.

SONG.

Love-sighs that are sighed and spent in vain,
Ah! folly, folly,
Thou dost transmute into a precious pain,
Sweet melancholy.
Ah! folly, folly,
Ah! fair melancholy,
Sweeter by far thy mild remedial pain,
Than if fierce hope should rise and throb again.

High hopes of glory sunk to naught,
Ah! folly, folly,
And deep perplexities of baffled thought
Thou healest, melancholy.
Ah! folly, folly,
Ah! sweet melancholy,
Thou dost bear with thee a balm unsought,
To heal the wounds of love and pride and thought.

Yet thou art a trivial cure for ill,
Pale melancholy,
Fitting best a feebler brain and will,
Ah! folly, folly,
Ay, sweet melancholy,
Folly art thou, folly.
Who only may not trivial ills endure
Will to thy pharmacy entrust his cure.

Since thou shalt not heal the wounds I know,
Pale melancholy,
I will seek if any comfort grow
In jovial folly,
Ah! folly, folly,
Worse than melancholy,
No other cure there is for Fortune's smart
Than a soul self-contained, and a proud innocent heart!

THE DIALOGUE.

UNTO my soul I said,
"Oh, vagrant soul!
When o'er my living head
A few years roll,
Is't true that thou shalt fly
Far away into the sky,
Leaving me in my place
Alone with my disgrace?

"For thou wilt stand in the East,
The night withdrawn,
White-robed as is a priest,
At the door of dawn;
While I within the ground,
In misery fast bound,
Shall lie, blind, deaf, and foul,
Since thou art fled, O soul."

Then said my soul to me:
"Thy lot is best;
For thou shalt tranquil be,
Sunk deep in rest,
While naked I shall know
The intolerable glow
When as, the sun, shall rise
A fire in fiery skies.

"Thou shalt lie cool and dark,
Forgetting all;
I shall float shamed and stark,
Till the sun fall:
Thou shalt be earth in earth,
Preparing for new birth;
While me in the heaven fierce,
Pure glories fright and pierce."

Then said I to my soul,
And she to me:
"Where'er life's current roll
We twain shall be,
Part here and part not here,
Partners in hope and fear,
Until, our exile done,
We meet at last in one."

THE BIRTH OF VERSE.

BLIND thoughts which occupy the brain,
Dumb melodies which fill the ear,
Dim perturbations, precious pain,
A gleam of hope, a chill of fear,—

These seize the poet's soul, and mould
The ore of fancy into gold.

And first no definite thought there is
In all that affluence of sound,
Like those sweet formless melodies
Piped to the listening woods around,
By birds which never teacher had
But love and knowledge: they are glad.

Till, when the chambers of the soul
Are filled with inarticulate airs,
A spirit comes which doth control
The music, and its end prepares;
And, with a power serene and strong,
Shapes these wild melodies to song.

Or haply, thoughts which glow and burn
Await long time the fitting strain,
Which, swiftly swelling, seems to turn
The silence to a load of pain;
And somewhat in him seems to cry,
"I will have utterance, or I die!"

Then of a sudden, full, complete,
The strong strain bursting into sound,
Words come with rhythmic rush of feet,
Fit music girds the language round,
And with a comeliness unsought,
Appears the winged, embodied thought.

But howsoever they may rise,
Fit words and music come to birth;
There soars an angel to the skies,
There walks a Presence on the earth—
A something which shall yet inspire
Myriads of souls unborn with fire.

And when his voice is hushed and dumb,
The flame burnt out, the glory dead,
He feels a thrill of wonder come
At that which his poor tongue has said;
And thinks of each diviner line—
"Only the hand that wrote was mine."

SONG.

Oh! were I rich and mighty,
With store of gems and gold,
And you, a beggar at my gate,
Lay starving in the cold;
I wonder, could I bear
To leave you pining there?

Or, if I were an angel,
And you an earth-born thing,
Beseeching me to touch you
In rising with my wing;
I wonder should I soar
Aloft, nor heed you more?

Or, dear, if I were only
A maiden cold and sweet,
And you, a humble lover,
Sighed vainly at my feet;
I wonder if my heart
Would know no pain or smart?

THE ENIGMA.

The gaslights flutter and flare
On the cruel stones of the street,
And beneath in the sordid glare
Pace legions of weary feet;
Fair faces that soon shall grow hard,
Shy glances already grown bold,
The wrecks of a girlhood marred
By shame and hunger and cold.

But here, as she passes along,
Is one whose young cheek still shows,
'Mid the pallid, pitiful throng,
The fresh bloom of a tender rose.
Not long has she walked with vice,
A recruit to the army of Ill,
A fresh lamb for the sacrifice
That steams up to Moloch still.

And the spell through which youth draws all,
The faint shyness in hurrying walk,
The lithe form slender and tall,
The soft burr in her simple talk,
Constrains the grave passer, whose brain
Is long leagues of fancy apart,
To thrill with a sudden pain
And an emptiness of heart.

Poor child! since it is not long
Since you were indeed but a child,
A gay thing of bird-like song,
And even as a bird is wild;
With no shadow of thought or care,
Laughing all the sweet hours away,
When every morning was fair,
And every season a May.

Through the red fallow on the hill
The white team laboured along,
While you roamed the green copses at will,
And mimicked the cuckoo's song;
While they tossed and carried the hay,
While the reapers were hid in the wheat,
You had only to laugh and to play,
Or to bathe in the brook your feet.

For your mother left you a child,
Your rough father's pride and joy:
Rejoiced that his girl was as wild
And fearless as any boy.

Though you would not plunder the nest,
Nor harry the shrieking hare,
You could gallop bare-backed with the best,
And knew where the orchises were.

"Like a boy" was what they said,
With your straight limbs and fearless face;
Like a girl in the golden head,
Gay fancies, and nameless grace.
Like a boy in high courage and all
Quick forces, and daring of will;
Like a girl in the peril to fall,
And innocent blindness to ill.

And even now, on the sordid street,
As you pass by the theatre door,
You bring with you some freshness sweet
Of the brightness and breezes of yore.
Not yet are the frank eyes grown bold,
Not yet have they lost all their joy;
Not yet has time taken the gold
From the short crisp curls of the boy.

And if truly a boy's they were,
Not thus would he pace forlorn;
Nor would careless passers-by dare
To shoot out the lips of scorn.
Is it Nature or man that makes
An unequal judgment arraign
Those whose equal nature takes
The mark of the self-same stain?

Leaving this one, shame and disgrace;
Leaving that one, honour and fame;
To this one, confusion of face,
To that one, a stainless name:

A high port and respect and wealth
For the one who is guilty indeed,
While the innocent walks by stealth
Through rough places with feet that bleed.

Do I touch a deep ulcer of Time,
A created or ultimate ill,
A primal curse or a crime,
Self-inflicted through ignorance still?
But meanwhile, poor truant, you come
With a new face year after year,
Leaving innocence, freedom, and home
For these dens of weeping and fear.

To decline by a swift decay,
To a thing so low and forlorn,
That, for all your fresh beauty to-day,
It were better you never were born;
Or to find in some rare-sent hour,
As a lily rooted in mire,
Love spring with its pure white flower
From the lowest depths of desire.

Heaven pity you! So little turns
The stream of our lives from the right;
So like is the flame that burns
To the hearth that gives warmth and light;
So fine the impassable fence,
Set for ever 'twixt right and wrong,
Between white lives of innocence
And dark lives too dreadful for song.

TO THE TORMENTORS.

Dear little friend, who, day by day,
Before the door of home
Art ready waiting till thy master come,
With monitory paw and noise,
Swelling to half delirious joys,
Whether my path I take
By leafy coverts known to thee before,
Where the gay coney loves to play,
Or the loud pheasant whirls from out the brake
Unharmed by us, save for some frolic chase,
Or innocent panting race;
Or who, if by the sunny river's side
Haply my steps I turn,
With loud petition constantly dost yearn
To fetch the whirling stake from the warm tide;
Who, if I chide thee, grovellest in the dust,
And dost forgive me, though I am unjust,
Blessing the hand that smote: who with fond love
Gazest, and fear for me, such as doth move
Those finer souls which know, yet may not see,
And are wrapped round and lost in ecstasy;—

And thou, dear little friend and soft,
Breathing a gentle air of hearth and home;
Whose low purr to the lonely ear doth oft
With deep refreshment come;
Though thy quick nature is not frank and gay
As that one's, yet with graceful play
Thou dost beguile the evenings, and dost sit
With mien demurely fit;
With half-closed eyes, as in a dream
Responsive to the singing steam,
Most delicately clean and white,
Thou baskest in the flickering light;

Quick-tempered art thou, and yet, if a child
Molest thee, pitiful and mild;
And always thy delight is, simply neat,
To seat thee faithful at thy master's feet;—

And thou, good friend and strong,
Who art the docile labourer of the world;
Who groanest when the battle mists are curled
On the red plain; who toilest all day long
To make our gain or sport; who art the care
That cleanses idle lives, which, but for thee
And thy pure, noble nature, perhaps might sink
To lower levels, born of lust and drink,
And half-forgotten sloughs of infamy,
Which desperate souls could dare;—
And ye, fair timid things, who lightly play
By summer woodlands at the close of day;—
What are ye all, dear creatures, tame or wild?
What other nature yours than of a child,
Whose dumbness finds a voice mighty to call,
In wordless pity, to the souls of all
Whose lives I turn to profit, and whose mute
And constant friendship links the man and brute?
Shall I consent to raise
A torturing hand against your few and evil days?
Shall I indeed delight
To take you, helpless kinsmen, fast and bound,
And while ye lick my hand
Lay bare your veins and nerves in one red wound,
Divide the sentient brain;
And while the raw flesh quivers with the pain,
A calm observer stand,
And drop in some keen acid, and watch it bite
The writhing life: wrench the still beating heart,
And with calm voice meanwhile discourse, and bland,
To boys who jeer or sicken as they gaze,
Of the great Goddess Science and her gracious ways?

Great Heaven! this shall not be, this present hell,
And none denounce it; well I know, too well,
That Nature works by ruin and by wrong,
Taking no care for any but the strong,
Taking no care. But we are more than she;
We touch to higher levels, a higher love
Doth through our being move:
Though we know all our benefits bought by blood,
And that by suffering only reach we good;
Yet not with mocking laughter, nor in play,
Shall we give death or carve a life away.

And if it be indeed
For some vast gain of knowledge, we might give
These humble lives that live,
And for the race should bid the victim bleed,
Only for some great gain,
Some counterpoise of pain;
And that with solemn soul and grave,
Like his who from the fire 'scapes, or the flood,
Who would save all, ay, with his heart's best blood,
But of his children chooses which to save!

Surely a man should scorn
To owe his weal to others' death and pain?
Sure 'twere no real gain
To batten on lives so weak and so forlorn?
Nor were it right indeed
To do for others what for self were wrong.
'Tis but the same dead creed,
Preaching the naked triumph of the strong;
And for this Goddess Science, hard and stern,
We shall not let her priests torment and burn:
We fought the priests before, and not in vain;
And as we fought before, so will we fight again.

CHILDREN OF THE STREET.

BRIGHT boys vociferous,
Girl-children clamorous,
Shrill trebles echoing,
Down the long street;
Every day come they there,
Afternoon foul or fair,
Shouting and volleying;
Through wintry winds and cold,
Through summer eves of gold,
Running and clamouring:
Never a day but brings,
Ragged and thinly clad,
Battling with poverty,
Hunger, and wretchedness,
Brave little souls forlorn,
Gaining hard bread.
"Terrible accident;
Frightful explosion, Sir;
News from Australia,
News from America;
Only one halfpenny,
Special edition, Sir,
Echo, Sir, *Echo!*"

Thus they shout breathlessly,
Dashing and hurrying,
Threading the carriages,
Under the rapid feet;
Frightening the passer-by,
Down the long street:
On till they chance to meet
Some vague philosopher.

* * *

And straightway the hurry,
And bustle, and noise,
Fade away in his thought
Before tranquiller joys.
Here are problems indeed,
Not to solve, it is true,
But on every side filling
The fanciful view;
Which ere he has grasped them
Are vanished and gone,
But leave him in solitude
Never alone:
Thoughts of Fate, and of Life,
And the end of it all,

Of the struggle and strife
Where few rise, many fall ;
Thoughts of Country and Empire,
Of Future and Past,
And the centuries gliding
So slow, yet so fast :
Old fancies, yet strange,
Thoughts sad and yet sweet,
Of lives come to harvest,
And lives incomplete ;
Of the lingering march,
Of the Infinite plan,
Bringing slowly, yet surely,
The glory of man ;
Of our failures and losses,
Our victory and gain ;
Of our treasure of hope
And our Present of pain.
And, higher than all,
That these young voices teach
A glowing conviction
Too precious for speech ;
That somewhere down deep
In each natural soul
Sacred verities sleep,
Holy waterfloods roll ;
That to young lives untaught,
Without friend, without home,
Some gleams of a light
That is heavenlier come ;
That to toil which is honest
A voice calls them still,
Which is more than the tempter's
And stronger than ill.

For, poor souls, 'twere better,
If pleasure were all,
Not to strive thus and labour,
But let themselves fall ;
They might gain, for a time,
Higher wages than this,
And that sharp zest of sinning
The innocent miss ;
They might know fuller life,
And, should fortune befriend,
Escape the Law's pains
From beginning to end ;
Or, if they should fail,
What for them does home bring
Which should make of a prison
So dreadful a thing ?
These children, whom formalists,
Narrow and stern,
Have denied what high principle
Comes from to learn ;
To whom this great empire,
Whose records they cry,
Is a book sealed as close
As the ages gone by ;
Who bear a name great
Among nations of earth,
But are English alone
By the fortune of birth ;
These young mouths that come
To a board well-nigh bare,
Who elsewhere were riches,
But here a grave care.

Great Empire ! fast bound
By invisible bands,
That convey to earth's limits
Thy rulers' commands ;
Who sittest alone
By thy rude northern sea,
On an ocean-built throne,
The first home of the free,
Whom thy tall chimneys shroud
In a life-giving gloom ;
Who clothest mankind
With the work of thy loom ;
Who o'er all seas dost send out
Thy deep-laden ships ;
Who teachest all nations
The words of thy lips ;
Who despatchest thy viceroys
Imperially forth

To the palms of thy East
And the snows of thy North;
Who governest millions
Of dark subtle men
By the might of just laws
And the sword of the pen;
Who art planted wherever
A white foot may tread,
On the poisonous land
Which for ages lies dead;
Who didst nourish the freeman
With milk from thy breast,
To the measureless Commonwealth
Lording the West;
Who holdest to-day
Of those once subject lands
A remnant too mighty
For weaklier hands;
Who in thy isle-continent,
Yearly increased,
Rearest empires of freemen
To sway the far East;
Who art set on lone islets
Of palm and of spice,
On deserts of sand
And on mountains of ice;
Who bring'st Freedom wherever
Thy flag is unfurled:
The exemplar, the envy,
The crown of the World!

What is't thou dost owe
To these young lives of thine,
What else but to foster
This dim spark divine?
Think of myriads like these,
Without teaching or home,
Who with pitiful accents
Beseeching thee come;
Think how Time, whirling on,
Time that never may rest,
Brings the strength of the loins
And the curve of the breast,
Till, with poor minds still childish,
These children are grown
To the age that shall give them
Young lives of their own;
Think of those, who to-day
In the sweet country air
Live, as soulless, almost,
As the birds which they scare;
Think of all those for whom,
To the immature brain,
The dull whirr of the loom
Brings a throbbing of pain;
Think of countless lives fallen,
Sunk, never to rise,
For the lack of the warning
Their country denies,—
Fallen, ruined, and lost,
Through all time that shall be,
Fallen for ever and lost
To themselves and to thee;—
Thou who standest, girt round
By strong foes on each side,
Foes who envy thy greatness,
Thy glory, thy pride;
Thou, who surely shalt need
Heart and soul, brain and hand,
Brain to plan, hand to bleed,
For thy might, O dear land!

* * * *

Till, while slowly he ponders
These thoughts in his brain,
See! there swiftly comes rushing
A young troop again.

"Terrible accident;
Frightful explosion, Sir;
News, Sir, from Germany;
Latest from India;
Special edition, Sir,
Only one half-penny!"

Thus the revoluble
Assonant *Echo*.

Again they rush breathlessly;
Dashing and hurrying,
Frighting the passer-by,
Shouting and volleying,
Bright boys vociferous,
Girl-children clamorous,
On till they meet again
Some vague philosopher.

SOULS IN PRISON.

I THOUGHT that I looked on the land of the lost,
A stony desert, arid and bare,
Gray under a heavy air.

Not a bird was there, nor a flower, nor a tree,
Nor rushing river, nor sounding sea;
And I seemed to myself like a ghost.

A land of shadows, a herbless plain,
A faint light aslant on the barren ground,
And never a sight nor a sound:

Only at times, of invisible feet,
Wearily tracking one dull, sad beat,
Too spiritless to complain;

And of faces hid by a blank white mask,
From which there glared out cavernous eyes,
Full of hate and revolt and lies:

As if the green earth on which others live
Had nothing of hope or of fear to give
But a hopeless, perpetual task.

Far in the distance a vast gray pile
Stretched out its spider-like, echoing ways
In long centrifugal rays;

And sometimes dimly I seemed to see
Dumb gangs of poor workers, fruitless!··
Bent in hard tasks useless and vile,

To which, issuing silent, in single rank,
Along narrow pathways stony and blank
The hopeless toilers would come.

Or else each was idly cooped in a cell
Narrow, and gloomy, and hard, as hell,
Which was all that they knew of home.

And around them frowning, grimy and tall,
With no ivy or lichen, a circling wall
Shut God and life utterly out;

And in the midst, with unclosing eye,
A muffled watcher stood silently,
As they paced about and about.

Never alone—for, wherever they went,
From some central tower an eye was bent
Along all the long, straight-drawn ways.

Never alone—for an unseen eye,
As the stealthy footstep went noiselessly by,
Swept each lonely cell with its gaze.

Always alone—for in all the throng
No word or glance as they shuffled along
But the order-word, sharp and loud.

Always alone—for in all the crowd
No glance of comfort from pitying eyes
Might pierce through the thick disguise.

Nor, if husband were there, or child, or wife,
Could the subtle communion of love and life
Escape that terrible eye.

Yet husbands and wives and children there were,
Young limbs, and age bent in a dumb despair,
Too strong or too weak to die.

Nothing remained, as it seemed, but thought
Of the old hopes vanished and come to nought,
And the hopeless, perpetual care,—

Nought but to sit, as the night would fall,
Tracing black ghosts on the blank white wall
In a silent rage of despair;

Or, before the dull daylight began to break,
To start at the iron-tongued summons and wake
To the curse of another day.

And so, in silence, to brood and plot
To regain the poor freedom and life which were not,
Though it bartered a soul away;

Or, later, to cherish the old offence
With a secret lurking devil of sense,
And a spring of desire self-bent,
Till at last all longing was sunk and spent
In a lifeless, fathomless slough of content.
Not repentance, nor fear, nor grief,

Nor belief at all, nor yet unbelief;
But a soul which skulks from itself like a thief,
And is damned for ever and dead.

* * * *

Thus I thought to myself; and, though straight I saw
It was only the house of retributive Law,
I shuddered and shrank, and fled.

A SEPARATION DEED.

WHEREAS we twain, who still are bound for life,
Who took each other for better and for worse,
Are now plunged deep in hate and bitter strife,
And all our former love is grown a curse;
So that 'twere better, doubtless, we should be
In loneliness, so that we were apart,
Nor in each other's changed eyes looking, see
The cold reflection of an alien heart:
To this insensate parchment we reveal
Our joint despair, and seal it with our seal.

Forgetting the dear days not long ago,
When we walked slow by starlight through the corn:
Forgetting, since our hard fate wills it so,

All but our parted lives and souls forlorn;
Forgetting the sweet fetters strong to bind
Which childish fingers forge and baby smiles,
Our common pride to watch the growing mind,
Our common joy in childhood's simple wiles,
The common tears we shed, the kiss we gave,
Standing beside the open little grave;

Forgetting these and more, if to forget
Be possible, as we would fain indeed.
And if the past be not too deeply set
In our two hearts, with roots that, touched, will bleed
Yet, could we cheat by any pretext fair
The world, if not ourselves—'twere so far well—
We would not put our bonds from us, and bare
To careless eyes the secrets of our hell;
So this indenture witnesseth that we,
As follows here, do solemnly agree.

We will take each our own, and will abide
Separate from bed and board for all our life;
Whatever chance of weal or woe betide,
Naught shall re-knit the husband and the wife.
Though one grow gradually poor and weak,
The other, lapt in luxury, will not heed;
Though one, in mortal pain, the other seek,
The other may not answer to the need;
We, who through long years did together rest
In wedlock, heart to heart, and breast to breast.

One shall the daughter take, and one the boy,—
Poor boy, who shall not hear his mother's name,
Nor feel her kiss; poor girl, for whom the joy
Of her sire's smile is changed for sullen shame:
Brother and sister, who, if they should meet,
With faces strange, amid the careless crowd,
Will feel their hearts beat with no quicker beat,
Nor inward voice of kinship calling loud:
Two widowed lives, whose fulness may not come;
Two orphan lives, knowing but half of home.

We have not told the tale, nor will, indeed,
Of dissonance, whether cruel wrong or crime,
Or sum of petty injuries which breed
The hate of hell when multiplied by time,
Dishonour, falsehood, jealous fancies, blows,
Which in one moment wedded souls can sunder;
But, since our yoke intolerable grows,
Therefore we set our seals and souls as under:
Witness the powers of Wrong and Hate and Death.
And this Indenture also witnesseth.

SONG.

THEY mount from glory to glory,
They sink from deep unto deep,
They proclaim their sweet passionate story,
They tremble on chords that weep,
And with them my soul spreads her wings,
And my heart goes out to them and sings.

And chord within chord interlaces,
Like the leaves that protect some fair bloom;
And with subtle and tremulous graces,
And tender lights dappled with gloom,
Like the fall of an ocean-borne bell,
The harmonies quicken and swell.

Then swift from those languishing voices
And accents which marry and die,
Like the sound of a trumpet, rejoices
One clear note unfaltering, high,
And my soul, through its magical power,
Bursts and dies like an aloe in flower.

FREDERIC.

As these sheets came in from the printer,
My lad who had brought me them said,
"Please, Sir, as I passed his office,
They told me that Frederic was dead."

And I knew in a moment thrill through me,
A keen little sorrow and smart,
Then a sudden revolt and rebellion
Assail me and fetter my heart,

As he went on with boyish prattle,
Before I had courage to speak:
"He died of consumption, they said, Sir;
And he earned sixteen shillings a week."

"How old was he?" "Just seventeen, Sir:
He had grown very tall and white."
And I thought of the childish features,
The bright cheeks, and eyes still more bright,

When, withdrawn from his school far too early,
He came with his treasured prize,
To show to his new-found master,
With a simple pride in his eyes;

And how it soon proved that his writing
Was so clear, and skilful, and fine,
That I set him the task to decipher
The hieroglyphs which are mine.

'Twas four years ago, and so splendid
Did my first book of songs appear,
That, though ofttimes already rejected,
I sent them forth then without fear.

Nor in vain. For now many minds know them,
And many are kindly in praise,
But the cold little hand that adorned them
Has cast up the sum of its days!

Sixteen shillings! this pittance could purchase
The flower of those boyish years!

This could give to that humble ambition
Dull entries, whose total is tears!

Poor young life which was bursting to blossom,
Which had borne its own fruitage one day,
Had those budding years mingled together
Slow labour with healthfuller play!

Is it man that has done this, or rather,
These dead blasts that blow, blow, blow, blow,
Week by week, month by month, till beneath them
Life withers and pulses beat slow?

The dull winds that to-day are slaying
Young and old with their poisonous breath,
Which slew the rash singer who praised them,
Not the less with a premature death.

Is it man with bad laws and fools' customs,
False pride, poverty, ignorant greed?
Is it God making lives for His pleasure,
Dooms these innocent victims to bleed?

Great riddle which one day shall be clearer,
Be our doubts with all reverence said;
But a strong power constrained me to write them,
When I heard little Frederic was dead.

TO MY MOTHERLAND.

DEAR motherland, forgive me, if too long
I hold the halting tribute of my song;
Letting my wayward fancy idly roam
Far, far from thee, my early home.
There are some things too near,
Too infinitely dear
For speech; the old ancestral hearth,
The hills, the vales that saw our birth,
Are hallowed deep within the reverent breast:
And who of these keeps silence, he is best.

Yet would not I appear,
Who have known many a brighter land and sea
Since first my boyish footsteps went from thee,
The less to hold thee dear;
Or lose in newer beauties the immense
First love for thee, O birth-land, which fulfils
My inmost heart and soul,—
Love for thy smiling and sequestered vales,
Love for thy winding streams which sparkling roll
Through thy rich fields, dear Wales,
From long perspectives of thy folded hills.

Ay! these are sacred, all;
I cannot sing of them, too near they are.
What if from out thy dark yews, gazing far,
I sat and sang, Llangunnor! of the vale
Through which fair Towy winds her lingering fall,

Gliding by Dynevor's wood-crowned steep,
And, alternating swift with deep,
By park and tower a living thing
Of loveliness meandering;
And traced her flowing, onward still,
By Grongar dear to rhyme, or Drysllwyn's castled hill,
Till the fresh upward tides prevail,
Which stay her stream and bring the sea-borne sail,
And the broad river rolls majestic down
Beneath the gray walls of my native town.

Would not my fancy quickly stray
To thee, sea-girt St. David's, far away,
A minster on the deep; or, further still,
To you, grand mountains, which the stranger knows:
Eryri throned amid the clouds and snows,
The dark lakes, the wild passes of the north;
Or Cader, a stern sentinel looking forth
Over the boisterous main; or thee, dear Isle
Not lovely, yet which canst my thought beguile—
Mona, from whose fresh wind-swept pastures came
My grandsire, bard and patriot, like in name
Whose verse his countrymen still love to sing
At bidding-feast or rustic junketing?

Ah, no! too near for song, and ye too near,
My brethren of the ancient race and tongue;
The bardic measures deep, the sweet songs sung
At congresses, which fan the sacred fire
Which did of old your ancestors inspire;
The simple worship sternly pure,
The faith unquestioning and sure,
Which doth the priest despise and his dark ways,
And riseth best to fullest praise
Beneath some humble roof-tree, rude and bare,
Or through the mountains' unpolluted air;
Who know not violence nor blood,
And who, if sometimes ye decline from good,
Sin the soft sins which gentler spirits move,
Which warmer Fancy breeds, and too much love.

I may not sing of you,
Or tell my love—others there are who will,
Who haply bear not yet a love so true
As that my soul doth fill—
If to applause it lead, or gain, or fame;
Better than this it were to bear the pain
Which comes to higher spirits when they know
They fire in other souls no answering glow;
Love those who love me not again,
And leave my country naught, not even a name.

THE EPIC OF HADES.

BOOK I.

TARTARUS.

In February, when the dawn was slow,
And winds lay still, I gazed upon the fields
Which stretched before me, lifeless, and the stream
Which laboured in the distance to the sea,
Sullen and cold. No force of fancy took
My thought to bloomy June, when all the land
Lay deep in crested grass, and through the dew
The landrail brushed, and the lush banks were lit
With strawberries, and the hot noise of bees
Wooed the chaste flowers. Rather I seemed to move
Thro' that weird land, Hellenic fancy feigned,
Beyond the fabled river and the bark
Of Charon; and forthwith on every side
Rose the thin throng of ghosts.
First thro' the gloom
Of a dark grove I strayed—a sluggish wood,
Where scarce the faint fires of the setting stars,
Or some cold gleam of half-discovered dawn,
Might pierce the darkling pines. A twilight drear
Brooded o'er all the depths, and filled the dank
And sunken hollows of the rocks with shapes
Of terror,—beckoning hands and noiseless feet
Flitting from shade to shade, wide eyes that stared
With horror, and dumb mouths which seemed to cry,
Yet cried not. An ineffable despair
Hung over them and that dark world and took
The gazer captive, and a mingled pang
Of grief and anger, grown to fierce revolt
And hatred of the Invisible Force which holds
The issue of our lives and binds us fast
Within the net of Fate; as the fisher takes
The little quivering sea-things from the sea
And flings them gasping on the beach to die
Then spreads his net for more. And then again
I knew myself and those, creatures who lie

Safe in the strong grasp of Unchanging Law,
Encompassed round by hands unseen, and chains
Which do support the feeble life that else
Were spent on barren space; and thus I came
To look with less of horror, more of thought,
And bore to see the sight of pain that yet
Should grow to healing, when the concrete stain
Of life and act were purged, and the cleansed soul,
Renewed by the slow wear and waste of time,
Soared after æons of days.
They seemed alone,
Those prisoners, thro' all time. Each soul shut fast
In its own jail of woe, apart, alone,
For evermore alone; no thought of kin,
Or kindly human glance, or fellowship
Of suffering or of sin, made light the load
Of solitary pain. Ay, though they walked
Together, or were prisoned in one cell
With the partners of their wrong, or with strange souls
Which the same Furies tore, they knew them not,
But suffered still alone; as in that shape
Of hell, fools build on earth, where hopeless sin
Rots slow in solitude, nor sees the face
Of men, nor hears the sound of speech, nor feels
The touch of human hand, but broods a ghost,
Hating the bare blank cell—the other self,
Which brought it thither—hating man and God,
And all that is or has been.

A great fear
And pity froze my blood, who seemed to see
A half-remembered form.
An Eastern King
It was who lay in pain. He wore a crown
Upon his aching brow, and his white robe
Was jewelled with fair gems of price, the signs
Of pomp and honour and all luxury,
Which might prevent desire. But as I looked
There came a hunger in the gloating eyes,
A quenchless thirst upon the parching lips,
And such unsatisfied strainings in the hands
Stretched idly forth on what I could not see,
Some fatal food of fancy; that I knew
The undying worm of sense, which frets and gnaws
The unsatisfied stained soul.
Seeing me, he said:
"What? And art thou too damned as I? Dost know
This thirst as I, and see as I the cool
Lymph drawn from thee and mock thy lips; and parch

For ever in continual thirst; and mark
The fair fruit offered to thy hunger fade
Before thy longing eyes? I thought there was
No other as I thro' all the weary lengths
Of Time the gods have made, who pined so long
And found fruition mock him.
Long ago,
When I was young on earth, 'twas a sweet pain
To ride all day in the long chase, and feel
Toil and the summer fire my blood and parch
My lips, while in my father's halls I knew
The cool bath waited, with its marble floor;
And juices from the ripe fruits pressed, and chilled
With snows from far-off peaks; and troops of slaves;
And music and the dance; and fair young forms,
And dalliance, and every joy of sense,
That haunts the dreams of youth, which strength and ease
Corrupt, and vacant hours. Ay, it was sweet
For a while to plunge in these, as fair boys plunge
Naked in summer streams, all veil of shame
Laid by, only the young dear body bathed
And sunk in its delight, while the firm earth,
The soft green pastures gay with innocent flowers,
Or sober harvest fields, show like a dream;
And nought is left, but the young life which floats
Upon the depths of death, to sink, maybe,
And drown in pleasure, or rise at length grown wise
And gain the abandoned shore.
Ah, but at last
The swift desire burns stronger and more strong,
And feeding on itself, grows tyrannous;
And the parched soul no longer finds delight
In the cool stream of old; nay, this itself,
Smitten by the fire of sense as by a flame,
Holds not its coolness more; and fevered limbs,
Seeking the fresh tides of their youth, may find
No more refreshment, but a cauldron fired
With the fires of nether hell; and a black rage
Usurps the soul, and drives it on to slake
Its thirst with crime and blood.
Longing Desire!
Unsatisfied, sick, impotent Desire!
Oh, I have known it ages long. I knew
Its pain on earth ere yet my life had grown
To its full stature, thro' the weary years
Of manhood, nay, in age itself; I knew
The selfsame weary thirst, unsatisfied
By all the charms of sense, by wealth and power

And homage; always craving, never quenched—
The undying curse of the soul! The ministers
And agents of my will drave far and wide
Over all lands and seas, seeking to find
Fresh pleasures for me, who had spent my sum
Of pleasure, and had power, not even in thought,
Nor faculty to enjoy. They tore apart
The sacred claustral doors of home for me,
Defiled the inviolate hearth for me, laid waste
The flower of humble lives, in hope to heal
The sickly fancies of the King, till rose
A cry of pain from all the land; and I
Grew happier for it, since I held the power
To quench desire in blood.
But even thus
The old pain faded not, but swift again
Revived; and thro' the sensual dull lengths
Of my seraglios I stalked, and marked
The glitter of the gems, the precious webs
Plundered from every clime by cruel wars
That strewed the sands with corpses; lovely eyes
That looked no look of love, and fired no more
Thoughts of the flesh; rich meats, and fruits, and wines
Grown flat and savourless; and loathed them all,
And only cared for power; content to shed
Rivers of innocent blood, if only thus
I might appease my thirst. Until I grew
A monster gloating over blood and pain.

Ah, weary, weary days, when every sense
Was satisfied, and nothing left to slake
The parched unhappy soul, except to watch
The writhing limbs and mark the slow blood drip,
Drop after drop, as the life ebbed with it;
In a new thrill of lust, till blood itself
Palled on me, and I knew the fiend I was,
Yet cared not—I who was, brief years ago,
Only a careless boy lapt round with ease,
Stretched by the soft and stealing tide of sense
Which now grew red; nor ever dreamed at all
What Furies lurked beneath it, but had shrunk
In indolent horror from the sight of tears
And misery, and felt my inmost soul
Sicken with the thought of blood. There comes a time
When the insatiate brute within the man,
Weary with wallowing in the mire, leaps forth
Devouring, and the cloven satyr-hoof
Grows to the rending claw, and the lewd leer
To the horrible fanged snarl, and the soul sinks
And leaves the man a devil, all his sin

Grown savourless, and yet he longs to sin
And longs in vain for ever.
Yet, methinks,
It was not for the gods to leave me thus.
I stinted not their worship, building shrines
To all of them; the Goddess of Love I served
With hecatombs, letting the fragrant fumes
Of incense and the costly steam ascend
From victims year by year; nay, my own son
Pelops, my best beloved, I gave to them
Offering, as he must offer who would gain
The great gods' grace, my dearest.
I had gained
Through long and weary orgies that strange sense
Of nothingness and wasted days which blights
The exhausted life, bearing upon its front
Counterfeit knowledge, when the bitter ash
Of Evil, which the sick soul loathes, appears
Like the pure fruit of Wisdom. I had grown
As wizards seem, who mingle sensual rites
And forms impure with murderous spells and dark
Enchantments; till the simple people held
My very weakness wisdom, and believed
That in my blood-stained palace-halls, withdrawn,
I kept the inner mysteries of Zeus
And knew the secret of all Being; who was
A sick and impotent wretch, so sick, so tired,
That even bloodshed palled.
For my stained soul,
Knowing its sin, hastened to purge itself
With every rite and charm which the dark lore
Of priestcraft offered to it. Spells obscene,
The blood of innocent babes, sorceries foul
Muttered at midnight — these could occupy
My weary days; till all my people shrank
To see me, and the mother clasped her child
Who heard the monster pass.
They would not hear,
They listened not—the cold ungrateful gods—
For all my supplications; nay, the more
I sought them were they hidden.
At the last
A dark voice whispered nightly: 'Thou, poor wretch,
That art so sick and impotent, thyself
The source of all thy misery, the great gods
Ask a more precious gift and excellent
Than alien victims which thou prizest not
And givest without a pang. But shouldst thou take
Thy costliest and fairest offering,
'Twere otherwise. The life which thou hast given

Thou mayst recall. Go, offer at the shrine
Thy best belovèd Pelops, and appease
Zeus and the averted gods, and know again
The youth and joy of yore.'
Night after night,
While all the halls were still, and the cold stars
Were fading into dawn, I lay awake
Distraught with warring thoughts, my throbbing brain
Filled with that dreadful voice. I had not shrunk
From blood, but this, the strong son of my youth—
How should I dare this thing? And all day long
I would steal from sight of him and men, and fight
Against the dreadful thought, until the voice
Seared all my burning brain, and clamoured, 'Kill!
Zeus bids thee, and be happy.' Then I rose
At midnight, when the halls were still, and raised
The arras, and stole soft to where my son
Lay sleeping. For one moment on his face
And stalwart limbs I gazed, and marked the rise
And fall of his young breast, and the soft plume
Which drooped upon his brow, and felt a thrill
Of yearning; but the cold voice urging me
Burned me like fire. Three times I gazed and turned
Irresolute, till last it thundered at me,
'Strike, fool! thou art in hell; strike, fool! and lose
The burden of thy chains.' Then with slow step
I crept as creeps the tiger on the deer,
Raised high my arm, shut close my eyes, and plunged
My dagger in his heart.
And then, with a flash,
The veil fell downward from my life and left
Myself to me—the daily sum of sense—
The long continual trouble of desire—
The stain of blood blotting the stain of lust—
The weary foulness of my days, which wrecked
My heart and brain, and left me at the last
A madman and accursèd; and I knew,
Far higher than the sensual slope which held
The gods whom erst I worshipped, a white peak
Of Purity, and a stern voice pealing doom—
Not the mad voice of old—which pierced so deep
Within my life, that with the reeking blade
Wet with the heart's blood of my child I smote
My guilty heart in twain.
Ah! fool, to dream
That the long stain of time might fade and merge
In one poor chrism of blood. They taught of yore,
My priests who flattered me—nor knew at all
The greater God I know, who sits afar
Beyond those earthly shapes, passionless, pure,

And awful as the Dawn—that the gods cared
For costly victims, drinking in the steam
Of sacrifice when the choice hecatombs
Were offered for my wrong. Ah no! there is
No recompense in these, nor any charm
To cleanse the stain of sin, but the long wear
Of suffering, when the soul which seized too much
Of pleasure here, grows righteous by the pain
That doth redress its ill. For what is Right
But equipoise of Nature, alternating
The Too Much and Too Little? Not on earth
The salutary silent forces work
Their final victory, but year on year
Passes, and age on age, and leaves the debt
Unsatisfied, while the o'erburdened soul
Unloads itself in pain.
Therefore it is
I suffer as I suffered ere swift death
Set me not free, no otherwise; and yet
There comes a healing purpose in my pain
I never knew on earth; nor ever here
The once-loved evil grows, only the tale
Of penalties grown greater hourly dwarfs
The accomplished sum of wrong. And yet desire
Pursues me still—sick, impotent desire,
Fiercer than that of earth.
We are ourselves
Our heaven and hell, the joy, the penalty,
The yearning, the fruition. Earth is hell
Or heaven, and yet not only earth; but still,
After the swift soul leaves the gates of death,
The pain grows deeper and less mixed, the joy
Purer and less alloyed, and we are damned
Or blest, as we have lived."
He ceased, with a wail
Like some complaining wind among the pines
Or pent among the fretful ocean caves,
A sick, sad sound.
Then as I looked, I saw
His eyes glare horribly, his dry parched lips
Open, his weary hands stretch idly forth
As if to clutch the air—infinite pain
And mockery of hope. "Seest thou them now?"
He said. "I thirst, I parch, I famish, yet
They still elude me, fair and tempting fruit
And cooling waters. Now they come again.
See, they are in my grasp, they are at my lips,
Now I shall quench me. Nay, again they fly
And mock me. Seest thou them, or am I shut
From hope for ever, hungering, thirsting still,
A madman and in Hell?"
And as I passed
In horror, his large eyes and straining hands
Froze all my soul with pity.

Then it was
A woman whom I saw: a dark pale Queen,
With passion in her eyes, and fear and pain
Holding her steadfast gaze, like one who sees
Some dreadful deed of wrong worked out and knows
Himself the cause, yet now is powerless
To stay the wrong he would.
Seeing me gaze
In pity on her woe, she turned and spake
With a low wailing voice—
"Thou well mayst gaze
With horror on me, sir, for I am lost;
I have shed the innocent blood, long years ago,
Nay, centuries of pain. I have shed the blood
Of him I loved, and found for recompense
But self-inflicted death and age-long woe,
Which purges not my sin. And yet not I
It was who did it, but the gods, who took
A woman's loveless heart and tortured it
With love as with a fire. It was not I
Who slew my love, but Fate. Fate 'twas which brought
My love and me together, Fate which barred
The path of blameless love, yet set Love's flame
To burn and smoulder in a hopeless heart,
Where no relief might come.
The King was old,
And I a girl. 'Tis an old tale which runs
Thro' the sad ages, and 'twas mine. He had spent
His sum of love long since, and I—I knew not
A breath of Love as yet. Ah, it is strange
To lose the sense of maidenhood, drink deep
Of life to the very dregs, and yet not know
A flutter of Love's wing. Love takes no thought
For pomp, or palace, or respect of men;
Nor always in the stately marriage bed,
Closed round by silken curtains, laid on down,
Nestles a rosy form; but 'mid wild flowers
Or desert tents, or in the hind's low cot,
Beneath the aspect of the unconscious stars,
Dwells all night and is blest.
My love, my life!
He was the old man's son, a fair white soul—
Not like the others, whom the fire of youth
Burns like a flame and hurries unrestrained
Thro' riotous days and nights, but virginal
And pure as any maid. No careless glance
He deigned for all the maidens young and fair
Who sought their Prince's eye. But evermore,
On the high pastures wandering alone,
He dwelt unwed; weaving to Artemis,

Fairest of all Olympian maids, a wreath
From the unpolluted meads, where never herd
Drives his white flock, nor ever scythe has come,
But the bee sails upon unfettered wing
Over the spring-like lawns, and Purity
Waters them with soft dews;* and yet he showed
Of all his peers most manly—heart and soul
A very man, tender and true, and strong
And pitiful, and in his limbs and mien
Fair as Apollo's self.
It was at first
In Trœzen that I saw him, when he came
To greet his sire. Amid the crowd of youths
He showed a Prince indeed; yet knew I not
Whom 'twas I saw, nor that I held the place
Which was his mother's, only from the throng
Love, with a barbed dart aiming, pierced my heart
Ere yet I knew what ailed me. Every glance
Fired me; the youthful grace, the tall straight limbs,
The swelling sinewy arms, the large dark eyes
Tender yet full of passion, the thick locks
Tossed from his brow, the lip and cheek which bore
The down of early manhood, seemed to feed
My heart with short-lived joy.
For when he stood
Forth from the throng and knelt before his sire,

* Euripides, "Hippolytus," lines 70–78.

Then raised his gaze to mine, I felt the curse
Of Aphrodité burn me, as it burned
My mother before me, and I dared not meet
His innocent, frank young eyes.
Said I then young?
Ay, but not young as mine. But I had known
The secret things of life, which age the soul
In a moment, writing on its front their mark
'Too early ripe;' and he was innocent,
My spouse in fitted years, within whose arms
I had defied the world.
I turned away
Like some white bird that leaves the flock, which sails
High in mid air above the haunts of men,
Feeling some little dart within her breast,
Not death, but like to death, and slowly sinks
Down to the earth alone, and bears her hurt
Unseen, by herbless sand and bitter pool,
And pines until the end.
Even from that day
I strove to gain his love. Nay, 'twas not I,
But the cruel gods who drove me. Day by day
We were together; for in days of old
Women were free, not pent in gilded jails
As afterwards, but free to walk alone,
For good or evil, free. I hardly took
Thought for my spouse, the King. For I had found

My love at last: what matter if it were
A guilty love? Yet love is love indeed,
Stronger than heaven or hell. Day after day
I set myself to tempt him from his proud
And innocent way, for I had spurned aside
Care for the gods or men—all but my love.

What need to tell the tale? Was it a sigh,
A blush, a momentary glance, which brought
Assurance of my triumph? It is long
Since I have lived, I cannot tell; I know
Only the penalty of death and hell
Which followed on my sin. I knew he loved.
It was not wonderful, seeing that we dwelt
A boy and girl together. I was fair,
And Eros fired my eyes and lent my voice
His own soft tremulous tones. But when our souls
Trembled upon the verge, and fancy feigned
His arms around me as we fled alone
To some free land of exile, came a scroll;
'Dearest, it may not be; I fear the Gods;
We dare not do this wrong. I go from hence
And see thy face no more. Farewell! Forget
The love we may not own; go, seek for both
Forgiveness from the gods.'
When I read the words,
The cruel words, methought my heart stood still,
And when the ebbing life returned I seemed
To have lost all thought of Love. Only Revenge
Dwelt with me still, the fiercer that I knew
My long-prized hope, which came so near success,
Snatched from me and for ever.
When I rose
From my deep swoon, I bade a messenger
Go, seek the King for me. He came and sate
Beside my couch, and all the doors were closed,
And all withdrawn. Then with the liar's art,
And hypocrite tears, and feigned reluctancy,
And all the subtle wiles a woman draws
From the armoury of hate, I did instil
The poison on his soul. Cunning devices,
False grief, false anger with his son, regrets,
And half confessions—these, with hateful skill
Confused together, drove the old man's brain
To frenzy; and I watched him, with a sneer,
Turn to a dotard thirsting for the life
Of his own child. But how to do the deed,
Yet shed no blood, nor know the people's hate,
Who loved the Prince, I knew not.
Till one day
The old man, looking out upon the sea,

Besought the dread Poseidon to avenge
The treachery of his son. And as we stood
Gazing upon the breathless blue, a cloud
Rose from the deep, a little fleecy cloud,
Which sudden grew and grew, and turned the blue
To purple; and a keen wind rose and sang
Higher and higher, and the wine-dark sea
Grew ruffled, and within the circling bay
The tiny ripples, stealing up the sand,
Plunged loud with manes of foam, until they swelled
To misty surges thundering on the shore.

Then at the old man's elbow as I stood,
A deep dark thought, sent by the powers of ill,
Answering, as now I know, my own black hate
And not my poor dupe's anger, fired my soul
And bade me speak. 'The god has heard thy prayer,'
I whispered; 'See the surge which wakes and swells
To fury; well I know what things shall be.
It is Poseidon's voice sounds in the storm
And sends thy vengeance. Young Hippolytus
Loves, as thou knowest, on the yellow sand,
Hard by the rippled margin of the wave,
To urge his flying steeds. Bid him go forth—
He will obey—and see what recompense
The god will send his wrong.

In the old man's eyes
A watery gleam of malice played awhile—
I hate him for it—and he bade his son,
Yoking his three young fiery colts, drive forth
His chariot on the sand.
And still the storm
Blew fiercer and more fierce, and the white crests
Plunged on the strand, and the loud promontories
Thundered back repercussive, and a mist
Of foam, torn landward, hid the sounding shore.

Then saw I him come forth and bid them yoke
His untamed colts. I had not seen his face
Since that last day, but, seeing him, I felt
The old love spring anew, yet mixed with hate—
A storm of warring passions. Tho' I knew
What end should come, yet would I speak no word
That might avert it. The old man looked forth;
I think he had well-nigh forgotten all
The wrong he fancied and the doom he prayed,
All but the father's pride in the strong son,
Who was so young and bold. I saw a smile
Upon the dotard's face, when now the steeds
Were harnessed and the chariot, on the sand
Along the circling margin of the bay,

Flew, swift as light. A sudden gleam of sun
Flashed on the silver harness as it went,
Burned on the brazen axles of the wheels,
And on the golden fillets of the Prince
Doubled the gold. Sometimes a larger wave
Would dash in mist around him, and in fear
The rearing coursers plunged, and then again
The strong young arm constrained them, and they flashed
To where the wave-worn foreland ends the bay.

And then he turned his chariot, a bright speck
Now seen, now hidden, but always, tho' the surge
Broke round it, safe; emerging like a star
From the white clouds of foam. And as I watched,
Speaking no word, and breathing scarce a breath,
I saw the firm limbs strongly set apart
Upon the chariot, and the reins held high,
And the proud head bent forward, with long locks
Streaming behind, as nearer and more near
The swift team rushed—until, with a half joy,
It seemed as if my love might yet elude
The slow sure anger of the god, dull wrath
Swayed by a woman's lie.
But on the verge,
As I cast my eyes, a vast and purple wall
Swelled swiftly towards the land; the lesser waves
Sank as it came, and to its toppling crest
The spume-flecked waters, from the strand drawn back,
Left dry the yellow shore. Onward it came,
Hoarse, capped with breaking foam, lurid, immense,
Rearing its dreadful height. The chariot sped
Nearer and nearer. I could see my love
With the light of victory in his eyes, the smile
Of daring on his lips: so near he came
To where the marble palace-wall confined
The narrow strip of beach—his brave young eyes
Fixed steadfast on the goal, in the pride of life,
Without a thought of death. I strove to cry,
But terror choked my breath. Then, like a bull
Upon the windy level of the plain
Lashing himself to rage, the furious wave,
Poising itself a moment, tossing high
Its bristling crest dashed downward on the strand.
With a stamp, with a rush, with a roar.
And when I looked,
The shore, the fields, the plain, were one white sea
Of churning, seething foam—chariot and steeds
Gone, and my darling on the wild mad surge
Tossed high, whirled down, beaten, and bruised, and flung,
Dying upon the marble.

My great love
Sprang up redoubled, and cast out my hate
And spurned all thought of fear; and down the stair
I hurried, and upon the bleeding form
I threw myself, and raised his head, and clasped
His body to mine, and kissed him on the lips,
And in his dying ear confessed my wrong,
And saw the horror in his dying eyes
And knew that I was damned. And when he breathed
His last pure breath, I rose and slowly spake—
Turned to a Fury now by love and pain—
To the old man who knelt, while all the throng
Could hear my secret: 'See, thou fool, I am
The murderess of thy son, and thou my dupe,
Thou and thy gods. See, he was innocent;
I murdered him for love. I scorn ye all,
Thee and thy gods together, who are deceived
By a woman's lying tongue! Oh, doting fool,
To hate thy own! And ye, false powers, which punish
The innocent, and let the guilty soul
Escape unscathed, I hate ye all—I curse,
I loathe you!'
Then I stooped and kissed my love,
And left them in amaze; and up the stair
Swept slowly to my chamber, and therein,
Hating my life and cursing men and gods,
I did myself to death.
But even here,
I find my punishment. Oh, terrible doom
Of souls like mine! To see their evil done
Always before their eyes, the one dread scene
Of horror. See, the wild wave on the verge
Towers horrible, and he—— Oh, Love, my Love!
Safety is near! quick! quicker! urge them on!
Thou wilt 'scape it yet!—Nay, nay, it bursts on him!
I have shed the innocent blood! Oh, dreadful gaze
Within his glazing eyes! Hide them, ye gods!
Hide them! I cannot bear them. Quick! a dagger!
I will lose their glare in death. Nay, die I cannot;
I must endure and live—Death brings not peace
To the lost souls in Hell."
And her eyes stared,
Rounded with horror, and she stooped and gazed
So eagerly, and pressed her fevered hands
Upon her trembling forehead with such pain
As drives the gazer mad.

Then as I passed,
I marked against the hardly dawning sky
A toilsome figure standing, bent and strained,
Before a rocky mass, which with great pain
And agony of labour it would thrust
Up a steep hill. But when upon the crest
It poised a moment, then I held my breath
With dread, for, lo! the poor feet seemed to clutch
The hillside as in fear, and the poor hands
With hopeless fingers pressed into the stone
In agony, and the limbs stiffened, and a cry
Like some strong swimmer's, whom the mightier stream
Sweeps downward, and he sees his children's eyes
Upon the bank; broke from him; and at last,
After long wrestlings with despair, the limbs
Relaxed, and as I closed my fearful eyes,
Seeing the inevitable doom—a crash,
A horrible thunderous noise, as down the steep
The shameless fragment leapt. From crag to crag
It bounded ever swifter, flashing fire
And wreathed with smoke, as to the lowest depths
Of the vale it tore, and seemed to take with it
The miserable form whose painful gaze
I caught, as with the great rock whirled and dashed
Downward, and marking every crag with gore
And long gray hairs, it plunged, yet living still,
To the black hollow; and then a silence came
More dreadful than the noise, and a low groan
Was all that I could hear.
When to the foot
Of the dark steep I hurried, half in hope
To find the victim dead—not recognizing
The undying life of Hell—I seemed to see
An aged man, bruised, bleeding, with gray hairs,
And eyes from which the cunning leer of greed
Was scarcely yet gone out.
A crafty voice
It was that answered me, the voice of guile
Part purified by pain:
"There comes not death
To those who live in Hell, nor hardly pause
Of suffering longer than may serve to make
The pain renewed, more piercing. Long ago,
I thought that I had cheated Death, and now
I seek him; but he comes not, nor know I
If ever he will hear me. Whence art thou?
Comest thou from earthly air, or whence? What power
Has brought thee hither? For I know indeed
Thou art not lost as I; for never here
I look upon a human face, nor see

The ghosts who doubtless here on every side
Suffer a common pain, only at times
I hear the echo of a shriek far off,
Like some faint ghost of woe which fills the pause
And interval of suffering; but from whom
The voice may come, or whence, I know not, only
The air teems with vague pain, which doth distract
The ear when for a moment comes surcease
Of agony, and the sense of effort spent
In vain and fruitless labour, and the pang
Of long-deferred defeat, which waits and takes
The world-worn heart, and maddens it when all—
Heaven, conscience, happiness, are staked and lost
For gains which still elude it.
Yet 'twas sweet,
A King in early youth, when pleasure is sweet,
To live the fair successful years, and know
The envy and respect of men. I cared
For none of youth's delights: the dance, the song,
Allured me not; the smooth soft ways of sense
Tempted me not at all. I could despise
The follies that I shared not, spending all
The long laborious days in toilsome schemes
To compass honour and wealth, and, as I grew
In name and fame, finding my hoarded gains
Transmuted into Power. The seas were white
With laden argosies, and all were mine.
The sheltering moles defied the wintry storms,
And all were mine. The marble aqueducts,
The costly bridges, all were mine. Fair roads
Wound round and round the hills—my work. The gods
Alone I heeded not, nor cared at all
For aught but that my eyes and ears might take,
Spurning invisible things, nor built I to them
Temple or shrine, wrapt up in life, set round
With earthly blessings like a god. I rose
To such excess of weal and fame and pride,
My people held me god-like. I grew drunk
With too great power, scoffing at men and gods,
Careless of both, but not averse to fling
To those too weak themselves, what benefits
My larger wisdom spurned.
Then suddenly
I knew the pain of failure. Summer storms
Sucked down my fleets even within sight of port.
A grievous blight wasted the harvest-fields,
Mocking my hopes of gain. Wars came and drained
My store, and I grew needy, knowing now
The hell of stronger souls, the loss of power
Wherein they exulted once. There comes no pain
Deeper than to have known delight of power,

And then to lose it all. But I, I would not
Sit tame beneath defeat, trimming my sails
To wait the breeze of Fortune—fickle breath
Which perhaps might breathe no more —but chose instead
By rash conceit and bolder enterprise
To win her aid again. I had no thought
Of selfish gain, only to be and act
As a god to those, feeding my sum of pride
With acted good.
But evermore defeat
Dogged me, and more and more my people grew
To doubt me, seeing not the wealth, the force,
Which once they worshipped. Then the lust of power
Loved, not for sake of others, but itself,
Grew on me, and the pride which can dare all,
Save failure only, seized me. Evil finds
Its ready chance. There were rich argosies
Upon the seas: I sank them, ship and crew,
In the unbetraying ocean. Wayfarers
Crossing the passes with rich merchandise
My creatures, hid behind the crags, o'erwhelmed
With rocks hurled downward. Yet I spent my gains
For the public weal, not otherwise; and they,
The careless people, took the piteous spoils
Which cost the lives of many, and a man's soul,
And blessed the giver. Empty venal blessings,
Which sting more deep than curses!
For awhile
I was content with this, but at the last
A great contempt and hatred of them took me,
The base, vile churls! Why should I stain my soul
For such as those—dogs that would fawn and lick
The hand that fed them, but, if food should fail,
Would turn and rend me? I would none of them;
I would grow rich and happy, being indeed
Godlike in brain to such. So with all craft,
And guile, and violence I enriched me, loading
My treasuries with gold. My deep-laid schemes
Of gain engrossed the long laborious days,
Stretched far into the night. Enjoy, I might not,
Seeing it was all to do, and life so brief
That ere a man might gain the goal he would,
Lo! Age, and with it Death, and so an end!
For all the tales of the indignant gods,
What were they but the priests'? I had myself
Broken all oaths; long time deceived and ruined
With every phase of fraud the pious fools
Whom oath-sworn Justice bound; battened on blood;
And what was I the worse? How should the gods

Bear rule if I were happy? Death alone
Was certain. Therefore must I haste to heap
Treasure sufficient for my need, and then
Enjoy the gathered good.
But gradually
There came—not great disasters which might crush
All hope, but petty checks which did decrease
My store, and left my labour vain, and me
Unwilling to enjoy; and gradually
I felt the chill approach of age, which stole
Higher and higher on me, till the life,
As in a paralytic, left my limbs
And heart, and mounted upwards to my brain,
Its last resort, and rested there awhile
Ere it should spread its wings. But even thus,
Tho' powerless to enjoy, the insatiate greed
And thirst of power sustained me, and supplied
Life's spark with some scant fuel, till it seemed,
Year after year, as if I could not die,
Holding so fast to life. I grew so old
That all the comrades of my youth, my prime,
My age, were gone, and I was left alone
With those who knew me not, bereft of all
Except my master passion—an old man
Forlorn, forgotten of the gods and Death.

Yet all the people, seeing me grow old
And prosperous, held me wise, and spread abroad
Strange fables, growing day by day more strange—
How I deceived the very gods. They thought
That I was blest, remembering not the wear
Of anxious thought, the growing sum of pain,
The failing ear and eye, the slower limbs,
Whose briefer name is Age: and yet I trow
I was not all unhappy, though I knew
It was too late to enjoy, and though my store
Increased not as my greed—nay, even sunk down
A little, year by year. Till, last of all,
When now my time was come and I had grown
A little tired of living, a trivial hurt
Laid me upon my bed; and as I mused
On my long life and all its villanies,
The wickedness I did, the blood I shed,
The guile, the frauds of years—they came with news,
One now, and now another; how my schemes
Were crushed, my enterprises lost, my toil
And labour all in vain. Day after day
They brought these tidings, while I longed to rise
And stay the tide of ill, and raved to know
I could not. At the last the added sum
Of evil, like yon great rock poised awhile
Uncertain, gathered into one, o'erwhelmed
My feeble strength, and left me ruined and lost,

And showed me all I was, and all the depth
And folly of my sin, and racked my brain,
And sank me in despair and misery,
And broke my heart and slew me.
Therefore 'tis
I spend the long, long centuries which have come
Between me and my sin, in such dread tasks
As that thou sawest. In the soul I sinned:
In body and soul I suffer. What I bade
My minions do to others, that of woe
I bear myself; and in the pause of ill,
As now, I know again the bitter pang
Of failure, which of old pierced thro' my soul
And left me to despair. The pain of mind
Is fiercer far than any bodily ill,
And both are mine—the pang of torture-pain
Always recurring; and, far worse, the pang
Of consciousness of black sins sinned in vain—
The doom of constant failure.
Will, fierce Will!
Thou parent of unrest and toil and woe,
Measureless effort! growing day by day
To force strong souls along the giddy steep
That slopes to the pit of Hell, where effort serves
Only to speed destruction! Yet I know
Thou art not, as some hold, the primal curse
Which doth condemn us; since thou bearest in thee
No power to satisfy thyself; but rather,
The spring of act, whereby in earth and heaven
Both men and gods do breathe and live and are,
Since Life is Act and not to Do is Death—
I do not blame thee: but to work in vain
Is bitterest penalty: to find at last
The soul all fouled with sin and stained with blood
In vain; ah, this is hell indeed—the hell
Of lost and striving souls!"
Then as I passed,
The halting figure bent itself again
To the old task, and up the rugged steep
Thrust the great rock with groanings. Horror chained
My parting footsteps, like a nightmare dream
Which holds us that we flee not, with fixed eyes
That loathe to see, yet cannot choose but gaze
Till all be done. Slowly, with dreadful toil
And struggle and strain, and bleeding hands and knees,
And more than mortal strength, against the hill
He pressed, the wretched one! till with long pain
He trembled on the summit, a gaunt form,
With that great rock above him, poised and strained,
Now gaining, now receding, now in act
To win the summit, now borne down again,
And then the inevitable crash—the mass

Leaping from crag to crag. But ere it ceased
In dreadful silence, and the low groan came,
My limbs were loosed with one convulsive bound;
I hid my face within my hands, and fled,
Surfeit with horror.

Then it was again
A woman whom I saw, pitiless, stern,
Bearing the brand of blood—a lithe dark form,
And cruel eyes which burned beneath the gems
That argued her a Queen, and on her side
An ancient stain of gore, which did befoul
Her royal robe. A murderess in thought
And dreadful act, who took within the toils
Her kingly Lord, and slew him of old time
After burnt Troy. I had no time to speak
When she shrieked thus:
"It doth repent me not.
I would 'twere yet to do, and I would do it
Again a thousand times, if the shed blood
Might for one hour restore me to the kisses
Of my Ægisthus. Oh, he was divine,
My hero, with the godlike locks and eyes
Of Eros' self! What boots it that they prate
Of wifely duty, love of spouse or child,
Honour or pity, when the swift fire takes
A woman's heart, and burns it out, and leaps
With fierce forked tongue around it, till it lies
In ashes, a dead heart, nor aught remains
Of old affections, naught but the new flame
Which is unquenched desire? It did not come,
My blessing, all at once, but the slow fruit
Of solitude and midnight loneliness,
And weary waiting for the tardy news
Of taken Troy. Long years I sate alone,
Widowed, within my palace, while my Lord
Was over seas, waging the accursèd war,
First of the file of Kings. Year after year
Came false report, or harder, no report
Of the great fleet. The summers waxed and waned,
The wintry surges smote the sounding shores,
And yet there came no end of it. They brought
Now hopeless failure, now great victories;
And all alike were false, all but delay
And hope deferred, which coming not, can break
The strong heart suffering wrings not. So I bore
Long time the solitary years, and sought
To solace the dull days with motherly cares
For those my Lord had left me. My firstborn,
Iphigeneia, sailed at first with him
Upon that fatal voyage, but the young
Orestes and Electra stayed with me—

Not dear as she was, for the firstborn takes
The mother's heart, and, with the milk it draws
From the mother's virgin breast, drains all the love
It bore, ay, even tho' the sire be dear;
Much more, then, when he is a King indeed,
Mighty in war and council, but too high
To stoop to a woman's love. But she was gone,
Nor heard I tidings of her, knowing not
If yet she walked the earth, nor if she bare
The load of children, even as I had borne
Her in my opening girlhood, when I leapt
From child to Queen, but never loved the King.

Thus the slow years rolled onward, till at last
There came a dreadful rumour—'She is dead,
Thy daughter, years ago. The cruel priests
Clamoured for blood; the stern cold Kings stood round
Without a tear, and he, her sire, with them,
To see a virgin bleed. They cut with knives
The slender girlish throat; they watched the blood
Drip slowly on the sand, and the young life
Meek as a lamb come to the sacrifice
To appease the angry gods.' And he, the King,
Her father, stood by too, and saw them work
The wickedness, breathing no word of wrath,
Till all was done! The cowards! the dull cowards!
I would some black storm, bursting suddenly,
Had whelmed them and their fleets, ere yet they dared
To waste an innocent life!
I had gone mad,
I know it, but for him, my love, my dear,
My fair sweet love. He came to comfort me
With words of friendship, holding that my Lord
Was bound, perhaps, to let her die—'The gods
Were ofttimes hard to appease—or was it indeed
The priests who asked it? Were there any gods?
Or only phantoms, creatures of the brain,
Born of the fears of men, the greed of priests,
Useful to govern women? Had he been
Lord of the fleet, not all the soothsayers
Who ever frighted cowards should have sunk
His soul to such black depths.' I hearkening to him
As 'twere my own thought grown articulate,
Found my grief turn to hate, and hate to love—
Hate of my Lord, love of the voice which spoke
Such dear and comfortable words. And thus,
Love to a storm of passion growing, swept

My wounded soul and dried my tears, as dries
The hot sirocco all the bitter pools
Of salt among the sand. I never knew
True love before; I was a child, no more,
When the King cast his eyes on me. What is it
To have borne the weight of offspring 'neath the zone
If Love be not their sire; or live long years
Of commerce, not of love? Better a day
Of Passion than the long unlovely years
Of wifely duty, when Love cometh not
To wake the barren days!
And yet at first
I hesitated long, nor would embrace
The blessing that was mine. We are hedged round,
We women, by such close-drawn ordinances,
Set round us by our tyrants, that we fear
To overstep a hand's breadth the dull bounds
Of custom; but at last Love, waking in me,
Burst all my chains asunder, and I lived
For naught but Love.
My son, the young Orestes,
I sent far off; my girl Electra only
Remained, too young to doubt me, and I knew
At last what 'twas to live.
So the swift years
Fleeted and found me happy, till the black
Ill-omened day when Rumour, thousand-tongued,
Whispered of taken Troy; and from my dream
Of happiness, sudden I woke, and knew
The coming retribution. We had grown
Too loving for concealment, and our tale
Of mutual love was bruited far and wide
Through Argos. All the gossips bruited it,
And were all tongue to tell it to the King
When he should come. And should the cold proud Lord
I never loved, the murderer of my girl,
Come 'twixt my love and me? A swift resolve
Flashed through me pondering on it: Love for Love
And Blood for Blood—the simple golden rule
Taught by the elder gods.
When I had taken
My fixed resolve, I grew impatient for it,
Counting the laggard days. Oh, it was sweet
To simulate the yearning of a wife
Long parted from her Lord, and mock the fools
Who dogged each look and word, and but for fear
Had torn me from my throne—the pies, the jays,
The impotent chatterers, who thought by words
To stay me in the act! 'Twas sweet to mock them
And read distrust within their eyes, when I,
Knowing my purpose, bade them quick prepare

All fitting honours for the King, and knew
They dared not disobey—oh, 'twas enough
To wing the slow-paced hours.
But when at last
I saw his sails upon the verge, and then
The sea-worn ship, and marked his face grown old,
The body a little bent, which was so straight,
The thin gray hairs which were the raven locks
Of manhood when he went, I felt a moment
I could not do the deed. But when I saw
The beautiful sad woman come with him,
The future in her eyes, and her pale lips
Silent, but charged with doom, two thoughts at once
Assailed me, bidding me despatch with a blow
Him and his mistress, making sure the will
Of fate, and my revenge.
Oh, it was strange
To see all happen as we planned; as 'twere
Some drama oft rehearsed, wherein each step,
Each word, is so prepared, the poorest player
Knows his turn come to do—the solemn landing—
The ride to the palace gate—the courtesies
Of welcome—the mute crowds without—the bath
Prepared within—the precious circling folds
Of tissue stretched around him, shutting out
The gaze, and folding helpless like a net
The mighty limbs—the battle-axe laid down
Against the wall, and I, his wife and Queen,
Alone with him, waiting and watching still,
Till the woman shrieked without. Then with swift step
I seized the axe, and struck him as he lay
Helpless, once, twice, and thrice—once for my girl,
Once for my love, once for the woman, and all
For Fate and my Revenge!
He gave a groan,
Once only, as I thought he might; and then
No sound but the quick gurgling of the blood,
As it flowed from him in streams, and turned the pure
And limpid water of the bath to red—
I had not looked for that—it flowed and flowed,
And seemed to madden me to look on it,
Until my love with hands bloody as mine,
But with the woman's blood, rushed in, and eyes
Rounded with horror; and we turned to go,
And left the dead alone.
But happiness
Still mocked me, and a doubt unknown before
Came on me, and amid the silken shows

And luxury of power I seemed to see
Another answer to my riddle of life
Than that I gave myself, and it was 'murder;'
And in my people's sullen mien and eyes,
'Murder;' and in the mirror, when I looked,
'Murder' glared out, and terror lest my son
Returning, grown to manhood, should avenge
His father's blood. For somehow, as 'twould seem,
The gods, if gods there be, or the stern Fate
Which doth direct our little lives, do filch
Our happiness—though bright with Love's own ray,
There comes a cloud which veils it. Yet, indeed,
My days were happy. I repent me not;
I would wade through seas of blood to know again
Those keen delights once more.
But my young girl
Electra, grown to woman, turned from me
Her modest maiden eyes, nor loved to set
Her kiss upon my cheek, but, all distraught
With secret care, hid her from all the pomps
And revelries which did befit her youth,
Walking alone; and often at the tomb
Of her lost sire they found her, pouring out
Libations to the dead. And evermore
I did bethink me of my son Orestes,
Who now should be a man; and yearned sometimes
To see his face, yet feared lest from his eyes
His father's soul should smite me.
So I lived
Happy and yet unquiet—a stern voice
Speaking of doom, which long time softer notes
Of careless weal, the music that doth spring
From the fair harmonies of life and love,
Would drown in their own concord. This at times,
Nay, day by day, stronger and dread-fuller,
With dominant accent, marred the sounds of joy
By one prevailing discord. So at length
I came to lose the Present in the dread
Of what might come; the penalty that waits
Upon successful sin; who, having sinned,
Had missed my sin's reward.
Until one day
I, looking from my palace casement, saw
A humble suppliant, clad in pilgrim garb,
Approach the marble stair. A sudden throb
Thrilled thro' me, and the mother's heart went forth
Thro' all disguise of garb and rank and years,
Knowing my son. How fair he was, how tall
And vigorous, my boy! What strong straight limbs

And noble port! How beautiful the shade
Of manhood on his lip! I longed to burst
From my chamber down, yearning to throw myself
Upon his neck within the palace court,
Before the guards — spurning my queenly rank,
All but my motherhood. And then a chill
Of doubt o'erspread me, knowing what a gulf
Fate set between our lives, impassable
As that great gulf which yawns 'twixt life and death
And 'twixt this Hell and Heaven. I shrank back,
And turned to think a moment, half in fear,
And half in pain; dividing the swift mind,
Yet all in love.
Then came a cry, a groan,
From the inner court, the clash of swords, the fall
Of a corpse upon the pavement; and one cried,
'The King is dead, slain by the young Orestes,
Who cometh hither.' With the word, the door
Flew open, and my son stood straight before me,
His drawn sword dripping blood. Oh, he was fair
And terrible to see, when from his limbs,
The suppliant's mantle fallen, left the mail
And arms of a young warrior. Love and Hate,
Which are the offspring of a common sire,
Strove for the mastery, till within his eyes
I saw his father's ghost glare unappeased
From out Love's casements.
Then I knew my fate
And his—mine to be slain by my son's hand,
And his to slay me, since the Furies drave
Our lives to one destruction; and I took
His point within my breast.
But I praise not
The selfish, careless gods who wrecked our lives,
Making the King the murderer of his girl,
And me his murderess; making my son
The murderer of his mother and her love—
A mystery of blood!—I curse them all,
The careless Forces, sitting far withdrawn
Upon the heights of Space, taking men's lives
For playthings, and deriding as in sport
Our happiness and woe—I curse them all.
We have a right to joy; we have a right,
I say, as they have. Let them stand confessed
The puppets that they are—too weak to give
The good they feign to love, since Fate, too strong
For them as us, beyond their painted sky,

Sits and derides them, all. I curse Fate too,
The deaf blind Fury, taking human souls
And crushing them, as a dull fretful child
Crushes its toys and knows not with what skill
Those feeble forms are feigned.
I curse, I loathe,
I spit on them. It doth repent me not.
I would 'twere yet to do. I have lived my life.
I have loved. See, there he lies within the bath,
And thus I smite him! thus! Didst hear him groan?
Oh, vengeance, thou art sweet! What, living still?
Ah me! we cannot die! Come, torture me,
Ye Furies—for I love not soothing words—
As once ye did my son. Ye miserable
Blind ministers of Hell, I do defy you;
Not all your torments can undo the Past
Of Passion and of Love!"

Even as she spake
There came a viewless trouble in the air,
Which took her, and a sweep of wings unseen,
And terrible sounds, which swooped on her and hushed
Her voice, and seemed to occupy her soul
With horror and despair; and as she passed
I marked her agonized eyes.

But as I went,
Full many a dreadful shape of lonely pain
I saw. What need to tell them? We are filled
Who live to-day with a more pleasant sense
Of the great love of God, than those of old
Who, groping in the dawn of Knowledge, saw
Only dark shadows of the Unknown; or he,
First-born of later singers, who swept deep
His awful lyre, and woke the voice of song,
Dumb thro' the age-long night. We dread to-day
To dwell on those long agonies its sin
Brings on the offending soul; who hold a creed
Of deeper Pity, knowing what chains of ill
Confine our petty lives. Each phase of woe,
Suffering, and torture which the gloomy thought
Of bigots feigns for others—all were there.
One there was stretched upon a rolling wheel,
Which was the barren round of sense, that still
Returned upon itself and broke the limbs
Bound to it day and night. Others I saw
Doomed, with unceasing toil, to fill the urns

Whose precious waters sank ere they could slake
Their burning thirst. Another shapeless soul,
Full of revolts and hates and tyrannous force,
The weight of earth, which was its earth-born taint,
Pressed groaning down, while with fierce beak and claw,
The vulture of remorse, piercing his breast,
Preyed on his heart. For others, overhead,
Great crags of rock impending seemed to fall,
But fell not nor brought peace. I felt my soul
Blunted with horrors, yearning to escape
To where, upon the limits of the wood,
Some scanty twilight grew.
But ere I passed
From those grim shades a deep voice sounded near,
A voice without a form.
. . "There is an end
Of all things that thou seest! There is an end
Of Wrong and Death and Hell, when the long wear
Of Time and Suffering has effaced the stain
Ingrown upon the soul, and the cleansed spirit,
Long ages floating on the wandering winds
Or rolling deeps of Space, renews itself
And doth regain its dwelling, and, once more
Blent with the general order, floats anew
Upon the stream of Things,* and comes at length,
After new deaths, to that dim waiting-place
Thou next shalt see, and with the justified
White souls awaits the End; or, snatched at once,
If Fate so will, to the pure sphere itself,
Lives and is blest, and works the Eternal Work
Whose name and end is Love! There is an end
Of Wrong and Death and Hell!"
Even as I heard,
I passed from out the shadow of Death and Pain,
Crying, "There is an end!"

BOOK II.

HADES.

THEN from those dark
And dreadful precincts passing, ghostly fields
And voiceless took me. A faint twilight veiled
The leafless, shadowy trees and herbless plains.
There stirred no breath of air to wake to life
The slumbers of the world. The sky above
Was one gray, changeless cloud; there looked no eye
Of Life from the veiled heavens; but Sleep and Death

* Virgil, "Æneid" vi. 740.

Compassed me everywhere. And yet no fear
Nor horror took me here, where was no pain
Nor dread, save that strange tremor which assails
One who in life's hot noontide looks on death
And knows he too shall die. The ghosts which rose
From every darkling copse showed thin and pale—
Thinner and paler far than those I left
In agony; even as Pity seems to wear
A thinner form than Fear.
Not caged alone
Like those the avenging Furies purged were these,
Nor that dim land as those black cavernous depths
Where no hope comes. Fair souls were they and white
Whom there I saw, waiting as we shall wait,
The Beatific End, but thin and pale
As the young faith which made them, touched a little
By the sad memories of the earth; made glad
A little by past joys: no more; and wrapt
In musing on the brief play played by them
Upon the lively earth, yet ignorant
Of the long lapse of years, and what had been
Since they too breathed Life's air, or if they knew
Keeping some echo only; but their pain
Was fainter than their joy, and a great hope
Like ours possessed them dimly.

First I saw
A youth who pensive leaned against the trunk
Of a dark cypress, and an idle flute
Hung at his side. A sorrowful sad soul,
Such as sometimes he knows, who meets the gaze,
Mute, uncomplaining yet most pitiful,
Of one whom Nature, by some secret spite,
Has maimed and left imperfect; or the pain
Which fills a poet's eyes. Beneath his robe
I seemed to see the scar of cruel stripes,
Too hastily concealed. Yet was he not
Wholly unhappy, but from out the core
Of suffering flowed a secret spring of joy,
Which mocked the droughts of Fate, and left him glad
And glorying in his sorrow. As I gazed
He raised his silent flute, and, half ashamed,
Blew a soft note; and as I stayed awhile
I heard him thus discourse—
"The flute is sweet
To gods and men, but sweeter far the lyre
And voice of a true singer. Shall I fear
To tell of that great trial, when I strove
And Phœbus conquered? Nay, no shame it is

To bow to an immortal melody;
But glory.
Once among the Phrygian hills
I lay a-musing,—while the silly sheep
Wandered among the thyme—upon the bank
Of a clear mountain stream, beneath the pines,
Safe hidden from the noon. A dreamy haze
Played on the uplands, but the hills were clear
In sunlight, and no cloud was on the sky.
It was the time when a deep silence comes
Upon the summer earth, and all the birds
Have ceased from singing, and the world is still
As midnight, and if any live thing move—
Some fur-clad creature, or cool gliding snake—
Within the pipy overgrowth of weeds,
The ear can catch the rustle, and the trees
And earth and air are listening. As I lay,
Faintly, as in a dream, I seemed to hear
A tender music, like the Æolian chords,
Sound low within the woodland, whence the stream,
Flowed full, yet silent. Long, with ear to ground,
I hearkened; and the sweet strain, fuller grown,
Rounder and clearer came, and danced along
In mirthful measure now, and now grown grave
In dying falls, and sweeter and more clear,
Tripping at nuptials and high revelry,
Wailing at burials, rapt in soaring thoughts,
Chanting strange sea-tales full of mystery,
Touching all chords of being, life and death,
Now rose, now sank, and always was divine,
So strange the music came.
Till, as I lay
Enraptured, shrill a sudden discord rang,
Then all the sounds were still. A lightning-flash,
As from a sun-kissed gem, revealed the wood.
A noise of water smitten, and on the heights
A fair white fleece of cloud, which swiftly climbed
Into the furthest heaven. Then, as I mused,
Knowing a parting goddess, straight I saw
A wayward splendour float upon the stream,
And knew it for this jewelled flute, which paused
Before me on an eddy. It I snatched
Eager, and to my ardent lips I bore
The wonder, and behold, with the first breath—
The first warm human breath, the silent strains,
The half-drowned notes which late the goddess blew,
Revived, and sounded clearer, sweeter far
Than mortal skill could make. So with delight

I left my flocks to wander o'er the wastes
Untended, and the wolves and eagles seized
The tender lambs, but I was for my art—
Nought else; and though the high-pitched notes divine
Grew faint, yet something lingered, and at last
So sweet a note I sounded of my skill,
That all the Phrygian highlands, all the far
Hill villages, were fain to hear the strain,
Which the mad shepherd made.
So, overbold,
And rapt in my new art, at last I dared
To challenge Phœbus' self.
'Twas a fair day
When sudden, on the mountain side, I saw
A train of fleecy clouds in a white band
Descending. Down the gleaming pinnacles
And difficult crags they floated, and the arch,
Drawn with its thousand rays against the sun,
Hung like a glory o'er them. Midst the pines
They clothed themselves with form, and straight I knew
The immortals. Young Apollo, with his lyre,
Kissed by the sun, and all the Muses clad
In robes of gleaming white; then a great fear,
Yet mixed with joy, assailed me, for I knew
Myself a mortal equalled with the gods.
Ah me! how fair they were! how fair and dread
In face and form, they showed, when now they stayed
Upon the thymy slope, and the young god
Lay with his choir around him, beautiful
And bold as Youth and Dawn! There was no cloud
Upon the sky, nor any sound at all
When I began my strain. No coward fear
Of what might come restrained me; but an awe
Of those immortal eyes and ears divine
Looking and listening. All the earth seemed full
Of ears for me alone—the woods, the fields,
The hills, the skies were listening. Scarce a sound
My flute might make; such subtle harmonies
The silence seemed to weave round me and flout
The half unuttered thought. Till last I blew,
As now, a hesitating note, and lo!
The breath divine, lingering on mortal lips,
Hurried my soul along to such fair rhymes,
Sweeter than wont, that swift I knew my life
Rise up within me, and expand, and all
The human, which so nearly is divine,
Was glorified, and on the Muses' lips,
And in their lovely eyes, I saw a fair
Approval, and my soul in me was glad.

For all the strains I blew were strains of love—
Love striving, love triumphant, love that lies
Within beloved arms, and wreathes his locks
With flowers, and lets the world go by and sings
Unheeding; and I saw a kindly gleam
Within the Muses' eyes, who were indeed,
Women, though god-like.
But upon the face
Of the young Sun-god only haughty scorn
Sate, and he swiftly struck his golden lyre,
And played the Song of Life; and lo, I knew
My strain, how earthy! Oh, to hear the young
Apollo playing! and the hidden cells
And chambers of the universe displayed
Before the charmèd sound! I seemed to float
In some enchanted cave, where the wave dips
In from the sunlit sea, and floods its depths
With reflex hues of heaven. My soul was rapt
By that I heard, and dared to wish no more
For victory; and yet because the sound
Of music that is born of human breath
Comes straighter from the soul than any strain
The hand alone can make; therefore I knew,
With a mixed thrill of pity and delight,
The nine immortal Sisters hardly touched
By that fine strain of music, as by mine,
And when the high lay trembled to its close,
Still doubting.
Then upon the Sun-god's face
There passed a cold proud smile. He swept his lyre
Once more, then laid it down, and with clear voice,
The voice of godhead, sang. Oh, ecstasy,
Oh happiness of him who once has heard
Apollo singing! For his ears the sound
Of grosser music dies, and all the earth
Is full of subtle undertones, which change
The listener and transform him. As he sang—
Of what I know not, but the music touched
Each chord of being—I felt my secret life
Stand open to it, as the parched earth yawns
To drink the summer rain; and at the call
Of those refreshing waters, all my thought
Stir from its dark and sunless depths, and burst
Into sweet, odorous flowers, and from their wells
Deep call to deep, and all the mystery
Of all that is, laid open. As he sang,
I saw the Nine, with lovely pitying eyes,
Sign 'He has conquered.' Yet I felt no pang
Of fear, only deep joy that I had heard
Such music while I lived, even though it brought
Torture and death. For what were it to lie

Sleek, crowned with roses, drinking vulgar praise,
And surfeited with offerings, the dull gift
Of ignorant hands—all which I might have known—
To this diviner failure? Godlike 'tis
To climb upon the icy ledge, and fall
Where other footsteps dare not. So I knew
My fate, and it was near.
For to a pine
They bound me willing, and with cruel stripes
Tore me, and took my life.
But from my blood
Was born the stream of song, and on its flow
My poor flute, to the clear swift river borne,
Floated, and thence adown a lordlier tide
Into the deep, wide sea. I do not blame
Phœbus, or Nature which has set this bar
Betwixt success and failure, for I know
How far high failure overleaps the bound
Of low successes. Only suffering draws
The inner heart of song and can elicit
The perfumes of the soul. 'Twere not enough
To fail, for that were happiness to him
Who ever upward looks with reverent eye
And seeks but to admire. So, since the race
Of bards soars highest; as who seek to show
Our lives as in a glass; therefore it comes
That suffering weds with song, from him of old,
Who solaced his blank darkness with his lyre;
Through all the story of neglect and scorn,
Necessity, sheer hunger, early death,
Which smite the singer still. Not only those
Who keep clear accents of the voice divine
Are honourable—they are happy, indeed,
Whate'er the world has held—but those who hear
Some fair faint echoes, though the crowd be deaf,
And see the white gods' garments on the hills,
Which the crowd sees not, though they may not find
Fit music for their thought; they too are blest,
Not pitiable. Not from arrogant pride
Nor over-boldness fail they who have striven
To tell what they have heard, with voice too weak
For such high message. More it is than ease,
Palace and pomp, honours and luxuries,
To have seen white Presences upon the hills,
To have heard the voices of the Eternal Gods."

So spake he, and I seemed to look on him,
Whose sad young eyes grow on us from the page
Of his own verse: who did himself to death:

Or whom the dullard slew: or whom the sea
Rapt from us: and I passed without a word,
Slow, grave, with many musings.

Then I came
On one a maiden, meek with folded hands,
Seated against a rugged face of cliff,
In silent thought. Anon she raised her arms,
Her gleaming arms, above her on the rock,
With hands which clasped each other, till she showed
As in a statue, and her white robe fell
Down from her maiden shoulders, and I knew
The fair form as it seemed chained to the stone
By some invisible gyves, and named her name:
And then she raised her frightened eyes to mine
As one who, long expecting some great fear,
Scarce sees deliverance come. But when she saw
Only a kindly glance, a softer look
Came in them, and she answered to my thought
With a sweet voice and low.
"I did but muse
Upon the painful past, long dead and done,
Forgetting I was saved.
The angry clouds
Burst always on the low flat plains, and swept
The harvest to the ocean; all the land
Was wasted. A great serpent from the deep,
Lifting his horrible head above their homes,
Devoured the children. And the people prayed
In vain to careless gods.
On that dear land,
Which now was turned into a sullen sea,
Gazing in safety from the stately towers
Of my sire's palace, I, a princess, saw,
Lapt in soft luxury, within my bower
The wreck of humble homes come whirling by,
The drowning, bleating flocks, the bellowing herds,
The grain scarce husbanded by toiling hands
Upon the sunlit plain, rush to the sea,
With floating corpses. On the rain-swept hills
The remnant of the people huddled close,
Homeless and starving. All my being was filled
With pity for them, and I joyed to give
What food and shelter and compassionate hands
Of woman might. I took the little ones
And clasped them shivering to the virgin breast
Which knew no other touch but theirs, and gave
Raiment and food. My sire, not stern to me,
Smiled on me as he saw. My gentle mother,
Who loved me with a closer love than binds

A mother to her son ; and sunned her-
self
In my fresh beauty, seeing in my young
gaze
Her own fair vanished youth ; doted on
me,
And fain had kept my eyes from the
sad sights
That pained them. But my heart was
faint in me,
Seeing the ineffable miseries of life,
And that mysterious anger of the gods,
And helpless to allay them. All in
vain
Were prayer and supplication, all in
vain
The costly victims steamed. The
vengeful clouds
Hid the fierce sky, and still the ruin
came.
And wallowing his grim length within
the flood,
Over the ravaged fields and homeless
homes,
The fell sea-monster raged, sating his
jaws
With blood and rapine.
Then to the dread shrine
Of Ammon went the priests, and
reverend chiefs
Of all the nation. White-robed, at
their head,
Went slow my royal sire. The oracle
Spoke clear, not as ofttimes in words
obscure,
Ambiguous. And as we stood to meet
The suppliants—she who bare me, with
her head
Upon my neck—we cheerful and with
song
Welcomed their swift return ; auguring
well
From such a quick-sped mission.
But my sire
Hid his face from me, and the crowd of
priests
And nobles looked not at us. And no
word
Was spoken till at last one drew a
scroll
And gave it to the queen, who straight-
way swooned,
Having read it, on my breast, and then
I saw,
I the young girl whose soft life scarcely
knew
Shadow of sorrow, I whose heart was
full
Of pity for the rest, what doom was
mine.

I think I hardly knew in that dread
hour
The fear that came anon ; I was trans-
formed
Into a champion of my race, made
strong
With a new courage, glorying to meet,
In all the ecstasy of sacrifice,
Death face to face. Some god, I know
not who,
O'erspread me, and despite my mother's
tears
And my stern father's grief, I met my
fate
Unshrinking.
When the moon rose clear from cloud
Once more again over the midnight sea,
And that vast watery plain, where were
before
Hundreds of happy homes, and well-
tilled fields,
And purple vineyards ; from my father's
towers
The white procession went along the
paths,

The high cliff paths, which well I loved of old,
Among the myrtles. Priests with censers went
And offerings, robed in white, and round their brows
The sacred fillet. With his nobles walked
My sire with breaking heart. My mother clung
To me the victim, and the young girls went
With wailing and with tears. A solemn strain
The soft flutes sounded, as we went by night
To a wild headland, rock-based in the sea.

There on a sea-worn rock, upon the verge,
To some rude stanchions, high above my head,
They bound me. Out at sea, a black reef rose,
Washed by the constant surge, wherein a cave
Sheltered deep down the monster. The sad queen
Would scarcely leave me, though the priests shrunk back
In terror. Last, torn from my endless kiss,
Swooning they bore her upwards. All my robe
Fell from my lifted arms, and left displayed
The virgin treasure of my breasts; and then
The white procession through the moonlight streamed
Upwards, and soon their soft flutes sounded low
Upon the high lawns, leaving me alone.

There stood I in the moonlight, left alone
Against the sea-worn rock. Hardly I knew,
Seeing only the bright moon and summer sea,
Which gently heaved and surged, and kissed the ledge
With smooth warm tides, what fate was mine. I seemed,
Soothed by the quiet, to be resting still
Within my maiden chamber, and to watch
The moonlight thro' my lattice. Then again
Fear came, and then the pride of sacrifice
Filled me, as on the high cliff lawns I heard
The wailing cries, the chanted liturgies,
And knew me bound forsaken to the rock,
And saw the monster-haunted depths of sea.

So all night long upon the sandy shores
I heard the hollow murmur of the wave,
And all night long the hidden sea caves made
A ghostly echo; and the sea birds mewed
Around me; once I heard a mocking laugh,
As of some scornful Nereid; once the waters
Broke louder on the scarpèd reefs, and ebbed
As if the monster coming; but again
He came not, and the dead moon sank, and still
Only upon the cliffs the wails, the chants,

And I forsaken on my sea-worn rock,
And lo, the monster-haunted depths of sea.

Till at the dead dark hour before the dawn,
When sick men die, and scarcely fear itself
Bore up my weary eyelids, a great surge
Burst on the rock, and slowly, as it seemed,
The sea sucked downward to its depths, laid bare
The hidden reefs, and then before my eyes—
Oh, terrible! a huge and loathsome snake
Lifted his dreadful crest and scaly side
Above the wave, in bulk and length so large,
Coil after hideous coil, that scarce the eye
Could measure its full horror; the great jaws
Dropped as with gore; the large and furious eyes
Were fired with blood and lust. Nearer he came,
And slowly, with a devilish glare, more near,
Till his hot fœtor choked me, and his tongue,
Forked horribly from out his poisonous jaws,
Played lightning-like around me. For awhile
I swooned, and when I knew my life again,
Death's bitterness was past. Then with a bound
Leaped up the broad red sun above the sea,
And lit the horrid fulgour of his scales,
And struck upon the rock; and as I turned
My head in the last agony of death,
I knew a brilliant sunbeam swiftly leaping
Downward from crag to crag, and felt new hope
Where all was hopeless. On the hills a shout
Of joy, and on the rocks the ring of mail;
And while the hungry serpent's gloating eyes
Were fixed on me, a knight in casque of gold
And blazing shield, who with his flashing blade
Fell on the monster. Long the conflict raged,
Till all the rocks were red with blood and slime,
And yet my champion from those horrible jaws
And dreadful coils was scatheless. Zeus his sire
Protected, and the awful shield he bore
Withered the monster's life and left him cold;
Dragging his helpless length and grovelling crest:
And o'er his glaring eyes the films of death
Crept, and his writhing flank and hiss of hate
The great deep swallowed down, and blood and spume
Rose on the waves; and a strange wailing cry
Resounded o'er the waters, and the sea
Bellowed within its hollow-sounding caves.

Then knew I, I was saved, and with me all
The people. From my wrists he loosed the gyves,
My hero; and within his godlike arms
Bore me by slippery rock and difficult path,
To where my mother prayed. There was no need
To ask my love. Without a spoken word
Love lit his fires within me. My young heart
Went forth, Love calling, and I gave him all.

Dost thou then wonder that the memory
Of this supreme brief moment lingers still,
While all the happy uneventful years
Of wedded life, and all the fair young growth
Of offspring, and the tranquil later joys,
Nay, even the fierce eventful fight which raged
When we were wedded, fade and are deceased,
Lost in the irrecoverable past?
Nay, 'tis not strange. Always the memory
Of overwhelming perils or great joys,
Avoided or enjoyed, writes its own trace
With such deep characters upon our lives,
That all the rest are blotted. In this place,
Where is not action, thought, or count of time,
It is not weary as it were on earth,
To dwell on these old memories. Time is born
Of dawns and sunsets, days that wax and wane
And stamp themselves upon the yielding face
Of fleeting human life; but here there is
Morning nor evening, act nor suffering,
But only one unchanging Present holds
Our being suspended. One blest day indeed,
Or centuries ago or yesterday,
There came among us one who was Divine,
Not as our gods, joyous and breathing strength
And careless life, but crowned with a new crown
Of suffering, and a great light came with him,
And with him he brought Time and a new sense
Of dim, long-vanished years; and since he passed
I seem to see new meaning in my fate,
And all the deeds I tell of. Evermore
The young life comes, bound to the cruel rocks
Alone. Before it the unfathomed sea
Smiles, filled with monstrous growths that wait to take
Its innocence. Far off the voice and hand
Of love kneel by in agony, and entreat
The seeming careless gods. Still when the deep
Is smoothest, lo, the deadly fangs and coils
Lurk near, to smite with death. And down the crags
Of Duty, like a sudden sunbeam, springs
Some golden soul half mortal, half divine,
Heaven-sent, and breaks the chain; and evermore

For sacrifice they die, through sacrifice
They live, and are for others, and no grief
Which smites the humblest but reverberates
Thro' all the close-set files of life, and takes
The princely soul that from its royal towers
Looks down and sees the sorrow.
Sir, farewell!
If thou shouldst meet my children on the earth
Or here, for maybe it is long ago
Since I and they were living, say to them
I only muse a little here, and wait
The waking."
And her lifted arms sank down
Upon her knees, and as I passed I saw her
Gazing with soft rapt eyes, and on her lips
A smile as of a saint.

And then I saw
A manly hunter pace along the lea,
His bow upon his shoulder, and his spear
Poised idly in his hand: the face and form
Of vigorous youth; but in the full brown eyes
A timorous gaze as of a hunted hart,
Brute-like, yet human still, even as the Faun
Of old, the dumb brute passing into man,
And dowered with double nature. As he came
I seemed to question of his fate, and he
Answered me thus:
"'Twas one hot afternoon
That I, a hunter, wearied with my day,
Heard my hounds baying fainter on the hills,
Led by the flying hart; and when the sound
Faded and all was still, I turned to seek,
O'ercome by heat and thirst, a little glade,
Beloved of old, where, in the shadowy wood,
The clear cold crystal of a mossy pool
Lipped the soft emerald marge, and gave again
The flower-starred lawn where ofttimes overspent
I lay upon the grass and careless bathed
My limbs in the sweet lymph.
But as I neared
The hollow, sudden through the leaves I saw
A throng of wood-nymphs fair, sporting undraped
Round one, a goddess. She with timid hand
Loosened her zone, and glancing round let fall
Her robe from neck and bosom, pure and bright,
(For it was Dian's self I saw, none else)
As when she frees her from a fleece of cloud
And swims along the deep blue sea of heaven
On sweet June nights. Silent awhile I stood,
Rooted with awe, and fain had turned to fly,
But feared by careless footstep to affright

Those chaste cold eyes. Great awe and reverence
Held me, and fear; then Love with passing wing
Fanned me, and held my eyes, and checked my breath,
Signing 'Beware!'
So for a time I watched,
Breathless as one a brooding nightmare holds,
Who fleeth some great fear, yet fleeth not;
Till the last flutter of lawn, and veil no more
Obscured, and all the beauty of my dreams
Assailed my sense. But ere I raised my eyes,
As one who fain would look and see the sun,
The first glance dazed my brain. Only I knew
The perfect outline flow in tender curves,
To break in doubled charms; only a haze
Of creamy white, and dimpled depths divine:
And then no more. For lo! a sudden chill,
And such thick mist as shuts the hills at eve,
Oppressed me gazing; and a heaven-sent shame,
An awe, a fear, a reverence for the unknown,
Froze all the springs of will and left me cold,
And blinded all the longings of my eyes,
Leaving such dim reflection still as mocks
Him who has looked on a great light, and keeps
On his closed eyes the image. Presently,
My fainting soul, safe hidden for awhile
Deep in Life's mystic shades, renewed herself,
And straight, the innocent brute within the man
Bore on me, and with half-averted eye
I gazed upon the secret.
As I looked,
A radiance, white as beamed the frosty moon
On the mad boy and slew him, beamed on me;
Made chill my pulses, checked my life and heat;
Transformed me, withered all my soul, and left
My being burnt out. For lo! the dreadful eyes
Of Godhead met my gaze, and through the mask
And thick disguise of sense, as through a wood,
Pierced to my life. Then suddenly I knew
An altered nature, touched by no desire
For that which showed so lovely, but declined
To lower levels. Nought of fear or awe,
Nothing of love was mine. Wide-eyed I gazed,
But saw no spiritual beam to blight
My brain with too much beauty, no undraped
And awful majesty; only a brute,
Dumb charm, like that which draws the brute to it,
Unknowing it is drawn. So gradually
I knew a dull content o'ercloud my sense,
And unabashed I gazed, like that dumb bird

Which thinks no thought and speaks no word, yet fronts
The sun that blinded Homer—all my fear
Sunk with my shame, in a base happiness.

But as I gazed, and careless turned and passed
Through the thick wood, forgetting what had been,
And thinking thoughts no longer, swift there came
A mortal terror: voices that I knew,
My own hounds' bayings that I loved before,
As with them often o'er the purple hills
I chased the flying hart from slope to slope,
Before the slow sun climbed the Eastern peaks,
Until the swift sun smote the Western plain;
Whom often I had cheered by voice and glance,
Whom often I had checked with hand and thong,
Grim followers, like the passions, firing me;
True servants, like the strong nerves, urging me
On many a fruitless chase, to find and take
Some too swift-fleeting beauty; faithful feet
And tongues, obedient always: these I knew,
Clothed with a new-born force and fiercer grown,
And stronger than their master; and I thought,
What if they tare me with their jaws, nor cared
That once I ruled them,—brute pursuing brute,
And I the quarry? Then I turned and fled,—
If it was I indeed that feared and fled—
Down the long glades, and through the tangled brakes,
Where scarce the sunlight pierced; fled on and on,
And panted, self-pursued. But evermore
The dissonant music which I knew so sweet,
When by the windy hills, the echoing vales,
And whispering pines it rang, now far, now near,
As from my rushing steed I leant and cheered
With voice and horn the chase—this brought to me
Fear of I knew not what, which bade me fly,
Fly always, fly; but when my heart stood still,
And all my limbs were stiffened as I fled,
Just as the white moon ghost-like climbed the sky,
Nearer they came and nearer, baying loud,
With bloodshot eyes and red jaws dripping foam;
And when I strove to check their savagery,
Speaking with words; no voice articulate came,
Only a dumb, low bleat. Then all the throng
Leapt swift on me, and tare me as I lay,
And left me man again.
Wherefore I walk
Along these dim fields peopled with the ghosts

Of heroes who have left the ways of earth
For this faint ghost of them. Sometimes I think,
Pondering on what has been, that all my days
Were shadows, all my life an allegory;
And, though I know sometimes some fainter gleam
Of the old beauty move me, and sometimes
Some beat of the old pulses; that my fate,
For ever hurrying on in hot pursuit,
To fall at length self-slain, was but a tale
Writ large by Zeus upon a mortal life,
Writ large, and yet a riddle. For sometimes
I read its meaning thus: Life is a chase,
And Man the hunter, always following on,
With hounds of rushing thought or fiery sense,
Some hidden truth or beauty, fleeting still
For ever through the thick-leaved coverts deep
And wind-worn wolds of time. And if he turn
A moment from the hot pursuit to seize
Some chance-brought sweetness, other than the search
To which his soul is set,—some dalliance,
Some outward shape of Art, some lower love,
Some charm of wealth and sleek content and home,—
Then, if he check an instant, the swift chase
Of fierce untempered energies which pursue,
With jaws unsated and a thirst for act,
Bears down on him with clanging shock, and whelms
His prize and him in ruin.
And sometimes
I seem to myself a thinker, who at last,
Amid the chase and capture of low ends,
Pausing by some cold well of hidden thought
Comes on some perfect truth, and looks and looks
Till the fair vision blinds him. And the sum
Of all his lower self pursuing him,
The strong brute forces, the unchecked desires,
Finding him bound and speechless, deem him now
No more their master, but some soulless thing;
And leap on him, and seize him, and possess
His life, till through death's gate he pass to life,
And, his own ghost, revives. But looks no more
Upon the truth unveiled, save through a cloud
Of creed and faith and longing, which shall change
One day to perfect knowledge.
But whoe'er
Shall read the riddle of my life, I walk
In this dim land amid dim ghosts of kings,
As one day thou shalt; meantime, fare thou well."

Then passed he; and I marked him slowly go
Along the winding ways of that weird land,
And vanish in a wood.

And next I knew
A woman perfect as a young man's dream,
And breathing as it seemed the nimble air
Of the fair days of old, when man was young
And life an Epic. Round the lips a smile
Subtle and deep and sweet as hers who looks
From the old painter's canvas, and derides
Life and the riddle of things, the aimless strife,
The folly of Love, as who has proved it all,
Enjoyed and suffered. In the lovely eyes
A weary look, no other than the gaze
Which ofttimes as the rapid chariot whirls,
And ofttimes by the glaring midnight streets,
Gleams out and chills our thought. And yet not guilt
Nor sorrow was it; only weariness,
No more, and still most lovely. As I named
Her name in haste, she looked with half surprise,
And thus she seemed to speak:
"What? Dost thou know,
Thou too, the fatal glances which beguiled
Those strong rude chiefs of old? Has not the gloom
Of this dim land withdrawn from out mine eyes
The glamour which once filled them? Does my cheek
Retain the round of youth and still defy
The wear of immemorial centuries?
And this low voice, long silent, keeps it still
The music of old time? Aye, in thine eyes
I read it, and within thine eyes I see
Thou knowest me, and the story of my life
Sung by the blind old bard when I was dead,
And all my lovers dust. I know thee not,
Thee nor thy gods, yet would I soothly swear
I was not all to blame for what has been,
The long fight, the swift death, the woes, the tears,
The brave lives spent, the humble homes uptorn,
To gain one poor fair face. It was not I
That curved these lips into this subtle smile,
Or gave these eyes their fire, nor yet made round
This supple frame. It was not I, but Love,
Love mirroring himself in all things fair,
Love that projects himself upon a life,
And dotes on his own image.
Ah! the days,
The weary years of Love and feasts and gold,
The hurried flights, the din of clattering hoofs
At midnight, when the heroes dared for me,

And bore me o'er the hills; the swift pursuits
Baffled and lost; or when from isle to isle
The high-oared galley spread its wings and rose
Over the swelling surges, and I saw,
Time after time, the scarce familiar town,
The shadowy hills, the well-loved palaces,
The gleaming temples fade, and all for me,
Me the dead prize, the shell, the soulless ghost,
The husk of a true woman; the fond words
Wasted on careless ears, that feigned to hear,
Of love to me unloving; the rich feasts,
The silken dalliance and soft luxury,
The fair observance and high reverence
For me who cared not, to whatever land
My kingly lover snatched me. I have known
How small a fence Love sets between the king
And the strong hind, who breeds his brood, and dies
Upon the field he tills. I have exchanged
People for people, crown for glittering crown,
Through every change a queen, and held my state
Hateful, and sickened in my soul to lie
Stretched on soft cushions to the lutes' low sound,
While on the wasted fields the clang of arms
Rang, and the foemen perished, and swift death,
Hunger, and plague, and every phase of woe
Vexed all the land for me. I have heard the curse
Unspoken, when the wife widowed for me
Clasped to her heart her orphans starved for me;
As I swept proudly by. I have prayed the gods,
Hating my own fair face which wrought such woe,
Some plague divine might light on it and leave
My curse a ruin. Yet I think indeed
They had not cursed but pitied, those true wives
Who mourned their humble lords, and straining felt
The innocent thrill which swells the mother's heart
Who clasps her growing boy; had they but known
The lifeless life, the pain of hypocrite smiles,
The dead load of caresses simulated,
When Love stands shuddering by to see his fires
Lit for the shrine of gold. What if they felt
The weariness of loveless love which grew
And through the jealous palace portals seized
The caged unloving woman, sick of toys,
Sick of her gilded chains, her ease, herself,
Till for sheer weariness she flew to mee
Some new unloved seducer? What if they knew
No childish loving hands, or worse than all,

Had borne them sullen to a sire unloved,
And left them without pain? I might have been,
I too, a loving mother and chaste wife,
Had Fate so willed.
For I remember well
How one day straying from my father's halls
Seeking anemones and violets,
A girl in Spring-time, when the heart makes Spring
Within the budding bosom, that I came
Of a sudden through a wood upon a bay,
A little sunny land-locked bay, whose banks
Sloped gently downward to the yellow sand,
Where the blue wave creamed soft with fairy foam,
And oft the Nereids sported. As I strayed
Singing, with fresh-pulled violets in my hair
And bosom, and my hands were full of flowers,
I came upon a little milk-white lamb,
And took it in my arms and fondled it,
And wreathed its neck with flowers, and sang to it
And kissed it, and the Spring was in my life,
And I was glad.
And when I raised my eyes
Behold, a youthful shepherd with his crook
Stood by me and regarded as I lay,
Tall, fair, with clustering curls, and front that wore
A budding manhood. As I looked a fear
Came o'er me, lest he were some youthful god
Disguised in shape of man, so fair he was;
But when he spoke, the kindly face was full
Of manhood, and the large eyes full of fire
Drew me without a word, and all the flowers
Fell from me, and the little milk-white lamb
Strayed through the brake, and took with it the white
Fair years of childhood. Time fulfilled my being
With passion like a cup, and with one kiss
Left me a woman.
Ah! the precious hours,
When on the warm bank crowned with flowers we sate
And thought no harm, and his thin reed pipe made
Low music, and no witness of our love
Intruded, but the tinkle of the flock
Stole from the hill, and 'neath the odorous shade
We dreamed away the day, and watched the waves
Smile shoreward, and beyond the sylvan capes
The innumerable laughter of the sea!

Ah youth and love! So passed the happy days
Till twilight, and I stole as in a dream
Homeward, and lived as in a happy dream,
And when they spoke answered as in a dream,
And through the darkness saw, as in a glass,

The happy, happy day, and thrilled and glowed
And kept my love in sleep, and longed for dawn
And scarcely stayed for hunger, and with morn
Stole eager to the little wood, and fed
My life with kisses. Ah! the joyous days
Of innocence, when Love was Queen in heaven,
And nature unreproved! Break they then still,
Those azure circles, on a golden shore?
Smiles there no glade upon the older earth
Where spite of all, gray wisdom, and new gods,
Young lovers dream within each other's arms
Silent, by shadowy grove, or sunlit sea?

Ah days too fair to last! There came a night
When I lay longing for my love, and knew
Sudden the clang of hoofs, the broken doors,
The clash of swords, the shouts, the groans, the stain
Of red upon the marble, the fixed gaze
Of dead and dying eyes,—that was the time
When first I looked on death,—and when I woke
From my deep swoon, I felt the night air cool
Upon my brow, and the cold stars look down,
As swift we galloped o'er the darkling plain;
And saw the chill sea glimpses slowly wake,
With arms unknown around me. When the dawn
Broke swift, we panted on the pathless steeps,
And so by plain and mountain till we came
To Athens, where they kept me till I grew
Fairer with every year, and many wooed,
Heroes and chieftains, but I loved not one.

And then the avengers came and snatched me back
To Sparta. All the dark high-crested chiefs
Of Argos wooed me, striving king with king
For one fair foolish face, nor knew I kept
No heart to give them. Yet since I was grown
Weary of honeyed words and suit of love,
I wedded a brave chief, dauntless and true.
But what cared I? I could not prize at all
His honest service. I had grown so tired
Of loving and of love, that when they brought
News that the fairest shepherd on the hills,
Having done himself to death for his lost love,
Lay, like a lovely statue, cold and white
Upon the golden sand, I hardly knew
More than a passing pang. Love, like a flower,
Love, springing up too tall in a young breast,

The growth of morning, Life's too scorching sun
Had withered long ere noon. Love, like a flame
On his own altar offering up my heart,
Had burnt my being to ashes.
Was it love
That drew me then to Paris? He was fair,
I grant you, fairer than a summer morn,
Fair with a woman's fairness, yet in arms
A hero, but he never had my heart,
Not love for him allured me, but the thirst
For freedom, if in more than thought I erred,
And was not rapt but willing. For my child
Born to an unloved father, loved me not,
The fresh sea called, the galleys plunged, and I
Fled willing from my prison and the pain
Of undesired caresses, and the wind
Was fair, and on the third day as we sailed,
My heart was glad within me when I saw
The towers of Ilium rise beyond the wave.

Ah, the long years, the melancholy years,
The miserable melancholy years!
For soon the new grew old, and then I grew
Weary of him, of all, of pomp and state
And novel splendour. Yet at times I knew
Some thrill of pride within me as I saw
From those high walls, a prisoner and a foe,
The swift ships flock at anchor in the bay,
The hasty landing and the flash of arms,
The lines of royal tents upon the plain,
The close-shut gates, the chivalry within
Issuing in all its pride to meet the shock
Of the bold chiefs without; so year by year
The haughty challenge from the warring hosts
Rang forth, and I with a divided heart
Saw victory incline, now here, now there,
And helpless marked the Argive chiefs I knew,
The spouse I left, the princely loves of old,
Now with each other strive, and now with Troy:
The brave pomp of the morn, the fair strong limbs,
The glittering panoply, the bold young hearts,
Athirst for fame of war, and with the night
The broken spear, the shattered helm, the plume
Dyed red with blood, the ghastly dying face,
And nerveless limbs laid lifeless. And I knew
The stainless Hector whom I could have loved,
But that a happy love made blind his eyes
To all my baleful beauty; fallen and dragged
His noble, godlike head upon the sand
By young Achilles' chariot; him in turn
Fallen and slain; my fair false Paris slain;

Plague, famine, battle, raging now within,
And now without, for many a weary year,
Summer and winter, till I loathed to live,
Who was indeed, as well they said, the Hell
Of men, and fleets, and cities. As I stood
Upon the walls, ofttimes a longing came,
Looking on rage, and fight, and blood, and death,
To end it all, and dash me down and die;
But no god helped me. Nay, one day I mind
I would entreat them. 'Pray you, lords, be men.
What fatal charm is this which Até gives
To one poor foolish face? Be strong, and turn
In peace, forget this glamour, get you home
With all your fleets and armies, to the land
I love no longer, where your faithful wives
Pine widowed of their lords, and your young boys
Grow wild to manhood. I have nought to give,
No heart, nor prize of love for any man,
Nor recompense. I am the ghost alone
Of the fair girl ye knew; she still abides,
If she still lives and is not wholly dead,
Stretched on a flowery bank upon the sea
In fair heroic Argos. Leave this form
That is no other than the outward shell
Of a once loving woman.'
As I spake,
My pity fired my eyes and flushed my cheek
With some soft charm; and as I spread my hands,
The purple, glancing down a little, left
The marble of my breasts and one pink bud
Upon the gleaming snows. And as I looked
With a mixed pride and terror, I beheld
The brute rise up within them, and my words
Fall barren on them. So I sat apart,
Nor ever more looked forth, while every day
Brought its own woe.
The melancholy years,
The miserable melancholy years,
Crept onward till the midnight terror came,
And by the glare of burning streets I saw
Palace and temple reel in ruin and fall,
And the long-baffled legions, bursting in
By gate and bastion, blunted sword and spear
With unresisted slaughter. From my tower
I saw the good old king; his kindly eyes
In agony, and all his reverend hairs
Dabbled with blood, as the fierce foeman thrust
And stabbed him as he lay; the youths, the girls,
Whom day by day I knew, their silken ease
And royal luxury changed for blood and tears,

Haled forth to death or worse. Then a great hate
Of life and fate seized on me, and I rose
And rushed among them, crying, 'See, 'tis I,
I who have brought this evil! Kill me! kill
The fury that is I, yet is not I!
And let my soul go outward through the wound
Made clean by blood to Hades! Let me die,
Not these who did no wrong!' But not a hand
Was raised, and all shrank back amazed, afraid,
As from a goddess. Then I swooned and fell
And knew no more, and when I woke I felt
My husband's arms around me, and the wind
Blew fair for Greece, and the beaked galley plunged;
And where the towers of Ilium rose of old,
A pall of smoke above a glare of fire.

What then in the near future? Ten long years
Bring youth and love to that deep summer-tide
When the full noisy current of our lives
Creeps dumb through wealth of flowers. I think I knew
Somewhat of peace at last, with my good Lord
Who loved too much, to palter with the past,
Flushed with the present. Young Hermione
Had grown from child to woman. She was wed;
And was not I her mother? At the pomp
Of solemn nuptials and requited love,
I prayed she might be happy, happier far
Than ever I was; so in tranquil ease
I lived a queen long time, and because wealth
And high observance can make sweet our days
When youth's swift joy is past, I did requite
With what I might, not love, the kindly care
Of him I loved not; pomps and robes of price
And chariots held me. But when Fate cut short
His life and love, his sons who were not mine
Reigned in his stead, and hated me and mine:
And knowing I was friendless, I sailed forth
Once more across the sea, seeking for rest
And shelter. Still I knew that in my eyes
Love dwelt, and all the baleful charm of old
Burned as of yore, scarce dimmed as yet by time:
I saw it in the mirror of the sea,
I saw it in the youthful seamen's eyes,
And was half proud again I had such power
Who now kept nothing else. So one calm eve,
Behold, a sweet fair isle blushed like a rose

Upon the summer sea: there my swift ship
Cast anchor, and they told me it was Rhodes.

There, in a little wood above the sea,
Like that dear wood of yore, I wandered forth
Forlorn, and all my seamen were apart,
And I, alone; when at the close of day
I knew myself surrounded by strange churls
With angry eyes, and one who ordered them,
A woman, whom I knew not, but who walked
In mien and garb a queen. She, with the fire
Of hate within her eyes, 'Quick, bind her, men!
I know her; bind her fast!' Then to the trunk
Of a tall plane they bound me with rude cords
That cut my arms. And meantime, far below,
The sun was gilding fair with dying rays
Isle after isle and purple wastes of sea.

And then she signed to them, and all withdrew
Among the woods and left us, face to face,
Two women. Ere I spake, 'I know,' she cried,
'I know that evil fairness. This it was,
Or ever he had come across my life,
That made him cold to me, who had my love
And left me half a heart. If all my life
Of wedlock was but half a life, what fiend
Came 'twixt my love and me, but that fair face?
What left his children orphans, but that face?
And me a widow? Fiend! I have thee now;
Thou hast not long to live. I will requite
Thy murders; yet, oh fiend! that art so fair,
Were it not haply better to deface
Thy fatal loveliness, and leave thee bare
Of all thy baleful power? And yet I doubt,
And looking on thy face I doubt the more,
Lest all thy dower of beauty be the gift
Of Aphrodité, and I fear to fight
Against the immortal Gods.'

Even with the word,
And she relenting, all the riddle of life
Flashed through me, and the inextricable coil
Of Being, and the immeasurable depths
And irony of Fate, burst on my thought,
And left me smiling in the eyes of death,
With this deep smile thou seëst. Then with a shriek
The woman leapt on me, and with blind rage
Strangled my life. And when she had done the deed
She swooned, and those her followers hasting back
Fell prone upon their knees before the corpse

As to a goddess. Then one went and brought
A sculptor, and within a jewelled shrine
They set me in white marble, bound to a tree
Of marble. And they came and knelt to me,
Young men and maidens, through the secular years,
While the old gods bore sway, but I was here,
And now they kneel no longer, for the world
Has gone from beauty.
But I think, indeed,
They well might worship still, for never yet
Was any thought or thing of beauty born
Except with suffering. That poor wretch who thought
I injured her, stealing the foolish heart
Which she prized but I could not, what knew she
Of that I suffered? She had loved her love,
Though unrequited, and had borne to him
Children who loved her. What if she had been
Loved yet unloving: all the fire of love
Burnt out before love's time in one brief blaze
Of passion. Ah, poor fool! I pity her,
Being blest and yet unthankful, and forgive,
Now that she is a ghost as I, the hand
Which loosed my load of life. For scarce indeed
Could any god who cares for mortal men
Have ever kept me happy. I had tired
Of simple loving, doubtless, as I tired
Of splendour and being loved. There be some souls
For which love is enough, content to bear
From youth to age, from chesnut locks to gray
The load of common, uneventful life
And penury. But I was not of these;
I know not now, if it were best indeed
That I had reared my simple shepherd brood,
And lived and died unknown in some poor hut
Among the Argive hills; or lived a queen
As I did, knowing every day that dawned
Some high emprise and glorious, and in death
To fill the world with song. Not the same meed
The gods mete out for all, or She, the dread
Necessity, who rules both gods and men,
Some to dishonour, some to honour moulds,
To happiness some, some to unhappiness.
We are what Zeus has made us, discords playing
In the great music, but the harmony
Is sweeter for them, and the great spheres ring
In one accordant hymn.
But thou, if e'er
There come a daughter of thy love, oh pray
To all thy gods, lest haply they should mar
Her life with too great beauty!"
So she ceased,
The fairest woman that the poet's dream

Or artist hand has fashioned. All the gloom
Seemed lightened round her, and I heard the sound
Of her melodious voice when all was still,
And the dim twilight took her.

Next there came
Two who together walked: one with a lyre
Of gold, which gave no sound; the other hung
Upon his breast, and closely clung to him,
Spent in a tender longing. As they came,
I heard her gentle voice recounting o'er
Some ancient tale, and these the words she said:

"Dear voice and lyre now silent, which I heard
Across yon sullen river, bringing to me
All my old life, while he, the ferryman,
Heard and obeyed, and the grim monster heard
And fawned on you. Joyous thou cam'st and free
Like a white sunbeam from the dear blithe earth,
Where suns shone clear, and moons beamed bright, and streams
Laughed with a rippling music,—nor as here
The dumb stream stole, the veiled sky slept, the fields
Were lost in twilight. Like a truant breeze,
Which steals in summer from the gates of dawn
To kiss the fields of spice, and wakes to life
Their slumbering perfume, through this silent land
Of whispering voices and of half-closed eyes,
Where scarce a footstep sounds, nor any strain
Of earthly song, thou cam'st; and suddenly
The pale cheeks flushed a little, the murmured words
Rose to a faint, thin treble; the throng of ghosts
Pacing along the sunless ways and still,
Felt a new life. Thou camest, dear, and straight
The dull cold river broke in sparkling foam,
The pale and scentless flowers grew perfumed; last
To the dim chamber, where with the sad queen
I sat in gloom, and silently inwove
Dead wreaths of amaranths; thy music came
Laden with life, and I, who seemed to know
Not life's voice only, but my own, arose
Along the hollow pathways following
The sound which brought back earth and life and love,
And memory and longing. Yet I went
With half-reluctant footsteps, as of one
Whom passion draws, or some high fantasy,
Despite himself, because some subtle spell,

Part born of dread to cross that sullen stream
And its grim guardians, part of secret shame
Of the young airs and freshness of the earth,
Being that I was, enchained me. Then at last,
From voice and lyre so high a strain arose
As trembled on the utter verge of being,
And thrilling, poured out life. Thus nearer drawn
I walked with thee, enclosed by honeyed sound
And soft environments of harmony,
Beyond the ghostly gates, beyond the dim
Calm fields, where the beetle hummed and the pale owl
Stole noiseless from the copse, and the white blooms
Stretched thin for lack of sun: so fair a light
Offspring of consonant airs environed me.
Nor looked I backward, as we seemed to move
To some high goal of thought and life and love,
Like twin birds flying fast with equal wing
Out of the night, to meet the coming sun
Above a sea. But on thy dear fair eyes,
The eyes that well I knew on the old earth,
I looked not, for with still averted gaze
Thou leddest, and I followed; for, indeed,
While that high strain was sounding, I was rapt
In faith and a high courage, driving out
All doubt and discontent and womanish fear,
Nay, even love itself. But when awhile
It sank a little, or seemed to sink and fall
To lower levels, seeing that use makes blunt
The too accustomed ear, straightway, desire
To look once more on thy recovered eyes
Seized me, and oft I called with piteous voice,
Beseeching thee to turn. But thou long time
Wert even as one unmindful, with grave sign
And waving hand, denying. At the last,
When now we neared the stream, on whose far shore
Lay life, great terror took me, and I shrieked
Thy name, as in despair. Then thou, as one
Who knows him set in some great jeopardy,
A swift death fronting him on either hand,
Didst slowly turning gaze; and lo! I saw
Thine eyes grown awful, life that looked on death,
Clear purity on black and cankered sin,
The immortal on corruption,—not the eyes
That erst I knew in life, but dread-fuller,
And stranger. As I looked, I seemed to swoon,

Some blind force whirled me back, and when I woke
I saw thee vanish in the middle stream,
A speck on the dull waters, taking with thee
My life, and leaving Love with me. But I
Not for myself bewail, but all for thee,
Who, but for me, wert now among the stars
With thy great Lord; I sitting at thy feet:
But now the fierce and unrestrained rout
Of passions woman-natured, finding thee
Scornful of love within thy lonely cell,
With blind rage falling on thee, tore thy limbs,
And left them to the Muses' sepulture,
While thy soul dwells in Hades. But I wail
My weakness always, who for Love destroyed
The life that was my Love. I prithee, dear,
Forgive me if thou canst, who hast lost heaven
To save a loving woman."
He with voice
Sweeter than any mortal melody,
And plaintive as the music that is made
By the Æolian strings, or the sad bird
That sings of summer nights:
"Eurydice,
Dear love, be comforted; not once alone
That which thou mournest is, but day by day
Some lonely soul, which walks apart and feeds
On high hill pastures, far from herds of men,
Comes to the low fat fields, and sunny vales
Joyous with fruits and flowers, and the white arms
Of laughing love; and there awhile he stays
Content, forgetting all the joys he knew,
When first the morning broke upon the hills,
And the keen air breathed from the Eastern gates
Like a pure draught of wine; forgetting all
The strains which float, as from a nearer heaven,
To him who treads at dawn the untrodden snows,
While all the warm world sleeps;—forgetting these
And all things that have been. And if he gain
To raise to his own heights the simpler souls
That dwell upon the plains, the untutored thought,
The museless lives, the unawakened brain
That yet might soar, then is he blest indeed.
But if he fail, then, leaving love behind,
The wider love of the race, the closer love
Of some congenial soul, he turns again
To the old difficult steeps, and there alone
Pines, till the widowed passions of his heart
Tear him and rend his soul, and drive him down
To the low plains he left. And there he dwells,

Missing the nearer skies, and the white peaks,
And the keen air of old; but in their stead
Finding the soft sweet sun of the vale, the clouds
Which veil the heavens indeed, but give the rains
That feed the streams of life and make earth green,
And bring at last the harvest. So I walk
In this dim land content with thee, O Love,
Untouched by any yearning of regret
For those old days; nor that the lyre which made
Erewhile such potent music now is dumb;
Nor that the voice that once could move the earth
(Zeus speaking through it), speaks in household words
Of homely love: Love is enough for me
With thee, O dearest; and perchance at last,
Zeus willing, this dumb lyre and whispered voice
Shall wake, by Love inspired, to such clear note
As soars above the stars, and swelling, lifts
Our souls to highest heaven."
Then he stooped,
And, folded in one long embrace, they went
And faded. And I cried, "Oh, strong God, Love,
Mightier than Death and Hell!"

And then I chanced
On a fair woman, whose sad eyes were full
Of a fixed self-reproach, like his who knows
Himself the fountain of his grief, and pines
In self-inflicted sorrow. As I spake
Enquiring of her grief, she answered thus:

"Stranger, thou seest of all the shades below
The most unhappy. Others sought their love
In death, and found it, dying; but for me
The death that took me, took from me my love,
And left me comfortless. No load I bear
Like those dark wicked women, who have slain
Their Lords for lust or anger, whom the dread
Propitious Ones within the pit below
Punish and purge of sin; only unfaith,
If haply want of faith be not a crime
Blacker than murder, when we fail to trust
One worthy of all faith, and folly bring
No harder recompense than comes of scorn
And loathing of itself.
Ah, fool, fool, fool,
Who didst mistrust thy love, who was the best,
And truest, manliest soul with whom the gods
Have ever blest the earth; so brave, so strong,
Fired with such burning hate of powerful ill,

So loving of the race, so swift to raise
The strenuous arm and ponderous club, and smite
All monstrous growths with ruin—Zeus himself
Showed scarce more mighty—and yet was the while
A very man, not cast in mould too fine
For human love, but ofttimes snared and caught
By womanish wiles, fast held within the net
His passions wove. Oh, it was joy to hear
How he went forth, the champion of his race,
Conquering in warfare as in love, now bent
To more than human tasks, now lapt in ease,
Now suffering, now enjoying. Strong, vast soul,
Tuned to heroic deeds, and set on high
Above the range of common petty sins—
Too high to mate with an unequal soul,
Too full of striving for contented days.

Ah me, how well I do recall the cause
Of all our ills! I was a happy bride
When that dark Até which pursues the steps
Of heroes—innocent blood-guiltiness—
Drove us to exile, and I joyed to be
His own, and share his pain. To a swift stream
Fleeing we came, where a rough ferryman
Waited, more brute than man. My hero plunged
In those fierce depths and battled with their flow,
And with great labour gained the strand, and bade
The monster speed me to him. But with lust
And brutal cunning in his eyes, the thing
Seized me and turned to fly with me, when swift
An arrow hissed from the unerring bow,
Pierced him, and loosed his grasp. Then as his eyes
Grew glazed in death there came in them a gleam
Of what I know was hate, and he said, 'Take
This white robe. It is costly. See, my blood
Has stained it but a little. I did wrong:
I know it, and repent me. If there come
A time when he grows cold—for all the race
Of heroes wander, nor can any love
Fix theirs for long—take it and wrap him in it,
And he shall love again.' Then, from the strange
Deep look within his eyes I shrank in fear,
And left him half in pity, and I went
To meet my Lord, who rose from that fierce stream
Fair as a god.
Ah me, the weary days
We women live, spending our anxious souls,
Consumed with jealous fancies, hungering still
For the belovèd voice and ear and eye,
And hungering all in vain! For life is more

To youthful manhood than to sit at home
Before the hearth to watch the children's ways,
And lead the life of petty household care
Which doth content us women. Day by day
I pined in Trachis for my love, while he,
Now in some warlike exploit busied, now
Slaying some monster, now at some fair court,
Resting awhile till some new enterprise
Called him, returned not. News of treacheries
Avenged, friends succoured, dreadful monsters slain,
Came from him: always triumph, always fame,
And honour, and success, and reverence,
And sometimes, words of love for me who pined
For more than words, and would have gone to him
But that the toils of such high errantry
Asked more than woman's strength.
So the slow years
Vexed me alone in Trachis, left forlorn
In solitude, nor hearing at the gate
The frank and cheering voice, nor on the stair
The heavy tread, nor feeling the strong arm
Around me in the darkling night, when all
My being ran slow. Last, subtle whispers came
Of womanish wiles which kept my Lord from me,
And one who, young and fair, a fresh-blown life
And virgin, younger, fairer far than I
When first he loved me, held him in the toils
Of scarce dissembled love. Not easily
Might I believe this evil, but at last
The oft-repeated malice finding me
Forlorn, and sitting imp-like at my ear,
Possessed me, and the fire of jealous love
Raged through my veins, not turned as yet to hate—
Too well I loved for that—but breeding in me
Unfaith in him. Love, setting him so high
And self so low, betrayed me, and I prayed,
Constrained to hold him false, the immortal gods
To make him love again.
But still he came not.
And still the maddening rumours worked, and still
'Fair, young, and a king's daughter,' the same words
Smote me and pierced me. Oh, there is no pain
In Hades—nay, nor deepest Hell itself,
Like that of jealous hearts, the torture-pain
Which racked my life so long.
Till one fair morn
There came a joyful message. 'He has come!
And at the shrine upon the promontory,
The fair white shrine upon the purple sea,
He waits to do his solemn sacrifice
To the immortal gods; and with him comes
A young maid beautiful as Dawn.'
Then I,
Mingling despair with love, rapt in deep joy

That he was come, plunged in the depths of hell
That she came too, bethought me of the robe
The Centaur gave me, and the words he spake,
Forgetting the deep hatred in his eyes,
And all but love, and sent a messenger
Bidding him wear it for the sacrifice
To the Immortals, knowing not at all
Whom Fate decreed the victim.
Shall my soul
Forget the agonized message which he sent,
Bidding me come? For that accursèd robe,
Stained with the poisonous accursèd blood,
Even in the midmost flush of sacrifice
Clung to him a devouring fire, and ate
The piteous flesh from his dear limbs, and stung
His great soft soul to madness. When I came,
Knowing it was my work, he bent on me,
Wise as a god through suffering and the near
Inevitable Death, so that no word
Of mine was needed, such a tender look
Of mild reproach as smote me. 'Couldst not thou
Trust me, who never loved as I love thee?
What need was there of magical arts to draw
The love that never wavered? I have lived
As he lives who through perilous paths must pass,
And lifelong trials, striving to keep down
The brute within him, born of too much strength
And sloth and vacuous days; by difficult toils,
Labours endured, and hard-fought fights with ill,
Now vanquished, now triumphant; and sometimes,
In intervals of too long labour, finding
His nature grown too strong for him, falls prone
Awhile a helpless prey, then once again
Rises and spurns his chains, and fares anew
Along the perilous ways. Dearest, I would
That thou wert wedded to some knight who stayed
At home within thy gates, and were content
To see thee happy. But for me the fierce
Rude energies of life, the mighty thews,
The god-sent hate of Wrong, these drove me forth
To quench the thirst of battle. See, this maid,
This is the bride I destined for our son
Who grows to manhood. Do thou see to her
When I am dead, for soon I know again
The frenzy comes, and with it ceasing, death.
Go, therefore, ere I harm thee when my strength
Has lost its guidance. Thou wert rich in love,
Be now as rich in faith. Dear, for thy wrong
I do forgive thee.'
When I saw the glare
Of madness fire his eyes, and my ears heard
The groans the torture wrung from his great soul,

I fled with broken heart to the white shrine,
And knelt in prayer, but still my sad ear took
The agony of his cries.
Then I who knew
There was no hope in god or man for me
Who had destroyed my Love, and with him slain
The champion of the suffering race of men,
And that my jealous soul, though innocent
Of blood, was guilty of unfaith and vile
Mistrust, and wrapt in weakness like a cloak,
And made the innocent tool of hate and wrong,
Against all love and good; grown sick and filled
With hatred of myself, rose from my knees,
And went a little space apart, and found
A gnarled tree on the cliff, and with my scarf
Strangling myself, swung lifeless.
But in death
I found him not. For, building a vast pile
Of scented woods on Oeta, as they tell,
My hero with his own hand lighted it,
And when the mighty pyre flamed far and wide
Over all lands and seas, he climbed on it
And laid him down to die; but pitying Zeus,
Before the swift flames reached him, in a cloud
Descending, snatched the strong brave soul to heaven,
And set him mid the stars.

Therefore am I
Of all the blameless shades within this place
The most unhappy, if of blame, indeed,
I bear no load. For what is Sin itself,
But Error when we miss the road which leads
Up to the gate of heaven? Ignorance!
What if we be the cause of ignorance?
Being blind who might have seen! Yet do I know
But self-inflicted pain, nor stain there is
Upon my soul such as they bear who know
The dreadful scourge with which the stern judge still
Lashes their sins. I am forgiven, I know,
Who loved so much, and one day, if Zeus will,
I shall go free from hence, and join my Lord,
And be with him again."
And straight I seemed,
Passing, to look on some tormented life,
Which knows to-day the irony of Fate
In self-inflicted pain.

Together clung
The ghosts whom next I saw, bound three in one
By some invisible bond. A sire, of port
God-like as Zeus, to whom on either hand
A tender stripling clung. I knew them well,
As all men know them. One fair youth spake low:
"Father, it does not pain me now, to be

Drawn close to thee, and by a double bond,
With this my brother." And the other: "Nay,
Nor me, O father; but I bless the chain
Which binds our souls in union. If some trace
Of pain still linger, heed it not—'tis past:
Still let us cling to thee."
He with grave eyes
Full of great tenderness, upon his sons
Looked with the father's gaze, that is so far
More sweet, and sad, and tender, than the gaze
Of mothers,—now on this one, now on that,
Regarding them. "Dear sons, whom on the earth
I loved and cherished, it was hard to watch
Your pain; but now 'tis finished, and we stand
For ever, through all future days of time,
Symbols of patient suffering undeserved,
Endured and vanquished. Yet sad memory still
Brings back our time of trial.
The young day
Broke fair when I, the dread Poseidon's priest,
Joyous because the unholy strife was done,
And seeing the blue waters now left free
Of hostile keels—save where upon the verge
Far off the white sails faded—rose at dawn,
And white robed, and in garb of sacrifice,
And with the sacred fillet round my brows,
Stood at the altar; and behind, ye twain,
Decked by your mother's hand with new-cleansed robes,
And with fresh flower-wreathed chaplets on your curls,
Attended, and your clear young voices made
Music that touched your father's eyes with tears,
If not the careless gods. I seem to hear
Those high sweet accents mounting in the hymn
Which rose to all the blessed gods who dwelt
Upon the far Olympus—Zeus, the Lord,
And Sovereign Here, and the immortal choir
Of Deities, but chiefly to the dread
Poseidon, him who sways the purple sea
As with a sceptre, shaking the fixed earth
With stress of thundering surges. By the shrine
The meek-eyed victim, for the sacrifice,
Stood with his gilded horns. The hymns were done,
And I in act to strike, when all the crowd
Who knelt behind us, with a common fear
Cried, with a cry that well might freeze the blood,
And then, with fearful glances towards the sea,
Fled, leaving us alone—me, the high priest,
And ye, the acolytes; forlorn of men,
Alone, but with our god.
But we stirred not
We dared not fly, who in the solemn act
Of worship, and the ecstasy which comes

To the believer's soul, saw heaven revealed,
The mysteries unveiled, the inner sky
Which meets the enraptured gaze. How should we fear
Who thus were god-encircled! So we stood
While the long ritual spent itself, nor cast
An eye upon the sea. Till as I came
To that great act which offers up a life
Before life's Lord, and the full mystery
Was trembling to completion, quick I heard
A stifled cry of agony, and knew
My children's voices. And the father's heart,
Which is far more than rite or service done
By man for god, seeing that it is divine
And comes from God to men—this rising in me,
Constrained me, and I ceased my prayer, and turned
To succour you, and lo! the awful coils
Which crushed your lives already, bound me round
And crushed me also, as you clung to me,
In common death. Some god had heard the prayer,
And lo! we were ourselves the sacrifice—
The priest, the victim, the accepted life,
The blood, the pain, the salutary loss.

Was it not better thus to cease and die
Together in one blest moment, mid the flush
And ecstasy of worship, and to know
Ourselves the victims? They were wrong who taught
That 'twas some jealous goddess thus assailed
Our lives, revengeful for discovered wiles,
Or hateful of our Troy. Not readily
Should such base passions sway the immortal gods;
But rather do I hold it sooth indeed
That Zeus himself it was, who pitying
The ruin he foreknew, yet might not stay,
Since mightier Fate decreed it, sent in haste
Those dreadful messengers, and bade them take
The pious lives he loved, before the din
Of midnight slaughter woke, and the fair town
Flamed pitifully to the skies, and all
Was blood and ruin. Surely it was best
To die as we did, and in death to live,
A vision for all ages of high pain
Which passes into beauty, and is merged
In one accordant whole, as discords merge
In that great Harmony which ceaseless rings
From the tense chords of life, than to have lived
Our separate lives, and died our separate deaths,
And left no greater mark than drops which rain
Upon the unwrinkled sea. Those hosts which fell
Before the Scæan gate upon the sand,
Nor found a bard to sing their fate, but left

Their bones to dogs and kites—were they more blest
Than we who, in the people's sight before
Ilium's unshattered towers, lay down to die
Our swift miraculous death? Dear sons, and good,
Dear children of my love, now doubly dear
For this our common sorrow; suffering binds
Not gyves of pain alone, but fashions for us
A chain of purest gold, which though withdrawn
Or felt no longer, knits 'tween soul and soul,
Indissoluble bonds, and draws our lives
So close, that though the individual life
Be merged, there springs a common life which grows
To such dread beauty, as has power to take
The sting from sorrow, and transform the pain
Into transcendent joy: as from the storm
The unearthly rainbow draws its myriad hues
And steeps the world in fairness. All our lives
Are notes that fade and sink, and so are merged
In the full harmony of Being. Dear sons,
Cling closer to me. Life nor Death has torn
Our lives asunder, as for some, but drawn
Their separate strands together in a knot
Closer than Life itself, stronger than Death,
Insoluble as Fate."
Then they three clung
Together—the strong father and young sons,
And in their loving eyes I saw the Pain
Fade into Joy, Suffering in Beauty lost,
And Death in Love!

By a still sullen pool,
Into its dark depths gazing, lay the ghost
Whom next I passed. In form, a comely youth,
Scarce passed from boyhood. Golden curls were his,
And wide blue eyes. The semblance of a smile
Came on his lip—a girl's but for the down
Which hardly shaded it; but the pale cheek
Was soft as any maiden's, and his robe
Was virginal, and at his breast he bore
The perfumed amber cup which, when March comes,
Gems the dry woods and windy wolds, and speaks
The resurrection.
Looking up, he said:
"Methought I saw her then, my love, my fair,
My beauty, my ideal; the dim clouds
Lifted, methought, a little—or was it
Fond Fancy only? For I know that here
No sunbeam cleaves the twilight, but a mist

Creeps over all the sky and fields and pools,
And blots them ; and I know I seek in vain
My earth-sought beauty, nor can Fancy bring
An answer to my thought from these blind depths
And unawakened skies. Yet has use made
The quest so precious, that I keep it here,
Well knowing it is vain.
On the old earth
'Twas otherwise, when in fair Thessaly
I walked regardless of all nymphs who sought
My love, but sought in vain, whether it were
Dryad or Naiad from the woods or streams,
Or white-robed Oread fleeting on the side
Of fair Olympus, echoing back my sighs,
In vain, for through the mountains day by day
I wandered, and along the foaming brooks,
And by the pine-woods dry, and never took
A thought for love, nor ever 'mid the throng
Of loving nymphs who knew me beautiful
I dallied, unregarding ; till they said
Some died for love of me, who loved not one.
And yet I cared not, wandering still alone
Amid the mountains by the scented pines.
Till one fair day, when all the hills were still,
Nor any breeze made murmur through the boughs,
Nor cloud was on the heavens, I wandered slow,
Leaving the nymphs who fain with dance and song
Had kept me 'midst the glades, and strayed away
Among the pines, enwrapt in fantasy,
And by the beechen dells which clothe the feet
Of fair Olympus, wrapt in fantasy,
Weaving the thin and unembodied shapes
Which Fancy loves to body forth, and leave
In marble or in song ; and so strayed down
To a low sheltered vale above the plains,
Where the lush grass grew thick, and the stream stayed
Its garrulous tongue ; and last upon the bank
Of a still pool I came, where was no flow
Of water, but the depths were clear as air,
And nothing but the silvery gleaming side
Of tiny fishes stirred. There lay I down
Upon the flowery bank, and scanned the deep,
Half in a waking dream.
Then swift there rose,
From those enchanted depths, a face more fair
Than ever I had dreamt of, and I knew
My sweet long-sought ideal : the thick curls,

Like these, were golden, and the white robe showed
Like this; but for the wondrous eyes and lips,
The tender loving glance, the sunny smile
Upon the rosy mouth, these knew I not,
Not even in dreams; and yet I seemed to trace
Myself within them too, as who should find
His former self expunged, and him transformed
To some high thin ideal, separate
From what he was, by some invisible bar,
And yet the same in difference. As I moved
My arms to clasp her to me, lo! she moved
Her eager arms to mine, smiled to my smile,
Looked love to love, and answered longing eyes
With longing. When my full heart burst in words,
'Dearest, I love thee,' lo! the lovely lips,
'Dearest, I love thee,' sighed, and through the air
The love-lorn echo rang. But when I longed
To answer kiss with kiss, and stooped my lips
To her sweet lips in that long thrill which strains
Soul unto soul, the cold lymph came between
And chilled our love, and kept us separate souls
Which fain would mingle, and the self-same heaven
Rose, a blue vault above us, and no shade
Of earthly thing obscured us, as we lay
Two reflex souls, one and yet different,
Two sundered souls longing to be at one.

There, all day long, until the light was gone
And took my love away, I lay and loved
The image, and when night was come, 'Farewell,'
I whispered, and she whispered back, 'Farewell,'
With oh, such yearning! Many a day we spent
By that clear pool together all day long.
And many a clouded hour on the wet grass
I lay beneath the rain, and saw her not,
And sickened for her; and sometimes the pool
Was thick with flood, and hid her; and sometimes
Some cold wind ruffled those clear wells, and left
But glimpses of her, and I rose at eve
Unsatisfied, a cold chill in my limbs
And fever at my heart: until, too soon!
The summer faded, and the skies were hid,
And my love came not, but a quenchless thirst
Wasted my life. And all the winter long
The bright sun shone not, or the thick ribbed ice
Obscured her, and I pined for her, and knew
My life ebb from me, till I grew too weak

To seek her, fearing I should see no more
My dear. And so the long dead winter waned
And the slow spring came back. And one blithe day,
When life was in the woods, and the birds sang,
And soft airs fanned the hills, I knew again
Some gleam of hope within me, and again
With feeble limbs crawled forth, and felt the spring
Blossom within me; and the flower-starred glades,
The bursting trees, the building nests, the songs,
The hurry of life revived me; and I crept,
Ghost like, amid the joy, until I flung
My panting frame, and weary nerveless limbs,
Down by the cold still pool. And lo! I saw
My love once more, not beauteous as of old,
But oh, how changed! the fair young cheek grown pale,
The great eyes, larger than of yore, gaze forth
With a sad yearning look; and a great pain
And pity took me which were more than love,
And with a loud and wailing voice I cried,
'Dearest, I come again. I pine for thee,'
And swift she answered back, 'I pine for thee;'
'Come to me, oh, my own,' I cried, and she—
Come to me, oh, my own. Then with a cry
Of love I joined myself to her, and plunged
Beneath the icy surface with a kiss,
And fainted, and am here. And now, indeed,
I know not if it was myself I sought,
As some tell, or another. For I hold
That what we seek is but our other self,
Other and higher, neither wholly like
Nor wholly different, the half-life the gods
Retained when half was given—one the man
And one the woman; and I longed to round
The imperfect essence by its complement,
For only thus the perfect life stands forth
Whole, self-sufficing. Worse it is to live
Ill-mated than imperfect, and to move
From a false centre, not a perfect sphere,
But with a crooked bias sent oblique
Athwart life's furrows. 'Twas myself, indeed,
Thus only that I sought, that lovers use
To see in that they love, not that which is,
But that their fancy feigns, and view themselves
Reflected in their love, yet glorified,
And finer and more pure. Wherefore it is:
All love which finds its own ideal mate
Is happy—happy that which gives itself
Unto itself, and keeps, through long calm years,
The tranquil image in its eyes, and knows

Fulfilment and is blest, and day by day
Wears love like a white flower, nor holds it less
Though sharp winds bite, or hot suns fade, or age
Sully its perfect whiteness, but inhales
Its fragrance, and is glad. But happier still
He who long seeks a high goal unattained,
And wearies for it all his days, nor knows
Possession sate his thirst, but still pursues
The fleeting loveliness—now seen, now lost,
But evermore grown fairer, till at last
He stretches forth his arms and takes the fair
In one long rapture, and its name is Death."

Thus he; and seeing me stand grave: "Farewell.
If ever thou shouldst happen on a wood
In Thessaly, upon the plain-ward spurs
Of fair Olympus, take the path which winds
Through the close vale, and thou shalt see the pool
Where once I found my life. And if in Spring
Thou go there, round the margin thou shalt know
These amber blooms bend meekly, smiling down
Upon the crystal surface. Pluck them not.
But kneel a little while, and breathe a prayer
To the fair god of Love, and let them be.
For in those tender flowers is hid the life
That once was mine. All things are bound in one
In earth and heaven, nor is there any gulf
'Twixt things that live,—the flower that was a life,
The life that is a flower,—but one sure chain
Binds all, as now I know.
If there are still
Fair Oreads on the hills, say to them, sir,
They must no longer pine for me, but find
Some worthier lover, who can love again;
For I have found my love."
And to the pool
He turned, and gazed with dreaming eyes, and showed
Fair as an angel.

Leaving him enwrapt
In musings, to a gloomy pass I came
Between dark rocks, where scarce a gleam of light,
Not even the niggard light of that dim land,
Might enter; and the soil was black and bare,
Nor even the thin growths which scarcely clothed
The higher fields might live. Hard by a cave
Which sloped down steeply to the lowest depths,
Whence dreadful sounds ascended, seated still,

Her head upon her hands, I saw a maid
With eyes fixed on the ground—not Tartarus
It was, but Hades; and she knew no pain,
Except her painful thought. Yet there it seemed,
As here, the unequal measure which awaits
The adjustment, and meanwhile, inspires the strife
Which rears life's palace walls; and fills the sail
Which bears our bark across unfathomed seas,
To its last harbour; this prevailed there too,
And 'twas a luckless shade which sat and wept
Amid the gloom, though blameless. Suddenly,
She raised her head, and lo! the long curls, writhed,
Tangled, and snake-like—as the dripping hair
Of a dead girl who freed from life and shame,
From out the cruel wintry flow, is laid
Stark on the snow with dreadful staring eyes
Like hers. For when she raised her eyes to mine,
They chilled my blood, so great a woe they bore;
And as she gazed, wide-eyed, I knew my pulse
Beat slow, and my limbs stiffen. Then they wore,
At length, a softer look, and life revived
Within my breast as thus she softly spoke:

"Nay, friend, I would not harm thee. I have known
Great sorrow, and sometimes it racks me still,
And turns me into stone, and makes my eyes
As dreadful as of yore; and yet it comes
But seldom, as thou sawest, now, for Time
And Death have healing hands. Only I love
To sit within the darkness here, nor face
The throng of happier ghosts; if any ghost
Of happiness come here. For on the earth
They wronged me bitterly, and turned to stone
My heart, till scarce I knew if e'er I was
The happy girl of yore.
That youth who dreams
Up yonder by the margin of the lake,
Knew but a cold ideal love, but me
Love in unearthly guise, but bodily form,
Seized and betrayed.
I was a priestess once,
Of stern Athené, doing day by day
Due worship; raising, every dawn that came,
My cold pure hymns to take her virgin ear;
Nor sporting with the joyous company
Of youths and maids, who at the neighbouring shrine
Of Aphrodité served. Nor dance nor song
Allured me, nor the pleasant days of youth
And twilights 'mid the vines. They held me cold

Who were my friends in childhood. For my soul
Was virginal, and at the virgin shrine
I knelt, athirst for knowledge. Day by day
The long cold ritual sped, the liturgies
Were done, the barren hymns of praise went up
Before the goddess, and the ecstasy
Of faith possessed me wholly, till almost
I knew not I was woman. Yet I knew
That I was fair to see, and fit to share
Some natural honest love, and bear the load
Of children like the rest; only my soul
Was lost in higher yearnings. Like a god,
He burst upon those pallid lifeless days,
Bringing fresh airs and salt, as from the sea,
And wrecked my life. How should a virgin know
Deceit, who never at the joyous shrine
Of Cypris knelt, but ever lived apart,
And so grew guilty? For if I had spent
My days among the throng, either my fault
Were blameless, or undone. For innocence
The tempter spreads his net. For innocence
The gods keep all their terrors. Innocence
It is that bears the burden, which for guilt
Is lightened, and the spoiler goes his way,
Uncaring, joyous, leaving her alone,
The victim and unfriended. Was it just
In her, my mistress, who had had my youth,
To wreak such vengeance on me? I had erred,
It may be; but on him, whose was the guilt,
No heaven-sent vengeance lighted, but he sped
Away to other hearts across the deep,
Careless and free; but me, the cold stern eyes
Of the pure goddess withered; and the scorn
Of maids, despised before, and the great blank
Of love, this wrung my heart, whose love was gone,
And froze my blood; set on my brow despair,
And turned my gaze to stone, and filled my eyes
With horror, and stiffened the soft curls which once
Lay smooth and fair into such snake-like rings
As made my aspect fearful. All who saw,
Shrank from me and grew cold, and felt the warm,
Full tide of life freeze in them, seeing in me
Love's work, who sat wrapt up and lost in shame,
As in a cloak, consuming my own heart,
And was in hell already. As they gazed
Upon me, my despair looked forth so cold
From out my eyes, that if some spoiler came
Fresh from his wickedness, and looked on them,
Their glare would strike him dead; and those fair curls
Which once the accursèd toyed with, grew to be

The poisonous things thou seest; and so, with hate
Of man's injustice and the gods', who knew
Me blameless, and yet punished me; and sick
Of life and love, and loathing earth and sky,
And feeding on my sorrow, Hate at last
Left me a Fury.
Ah, the load of life
Which lives for hatred! We are made to love—
We women, and the injury which turns
The honey of our lives to gall, transforms
The angel to the fiend. For it is sweet
To know the dreadful sense of strength, and smite
And leave the tyrant dead with a glance; ay! sweet,
In that fierce lust of power, to slay the life
Which harmed not, when the suppliants' cry ascends
To ears which hate has deafened. So I lived
Long time in misery; to my sleepless eyes
No healing slumbers coming; but at length,
Zeus and the goddess pitying, I knew
Soft rest once more veiling my dreadful gaze
In peaceful slumbers. Then a blessed dream
I dreamt. For, lo! a god-like knight in mail
Of gold, who sheared with his keen flashing blade;
With scarce a pang of pain, the visage cold
Which too great sorrow left me; at one stroke
Clean from the trunk, and then o'er land and sea,
Invisible, sped with winged heels, to where,
Upon a sea-worn cape, a fair young maid,
More blameless even than I was, chained and bound,
Waited a monster from the deep and stood
In innocent nakedness. Then, as he rose,
Loathsome, from out the depths, a monstrous growth,
A creature wholly serpent, partly man,
The wrongs that I had known, stronger than death,
Rose up with such black hate in me again,
And wreathed such hissing poison through my hair,
And shot such deadly glances from my eyes,
That nought that saw might live. And the vile worm
Was slain, and she delivered. Then I dreamt
My mistress, whom I thought so stern to me,
Athené, set those dreadful staring eyes,
And that despairing visage, on her shield
Of chastity, and bears it evermore
To fright the waverer from the wrong he would,
And strike the unrepenting spoiler, dead."

Then for a little paused she, while I saw
Again her eyes grow dreadful, till once more,

And with a softer glance :
" From that blest dream
I woke not on the earth, but only here.
And now my pain is lightened since I know
My dream, which was a dream within the dream
Which is our life, fulfilled. And I have saved
Another through my suffering, and through her
A people. Oh, strange chain of sacrifice,
That binds an innocent life, and from its blood
And sorrow works out joy! Oh, mystery
Of pain and evil! wrong grown salutary,
And mighty to redeem! If thou shouldst see
A woman on the earth, who pays today
Like penalty of sin, and the new gods
(For after Saturn, Zeus ruled; after him
It may be there are others) love to take
The tender heart of girlhood, and to immure
Within a cold and cloistered cell the life
Which nature meant to bless, and if Love come
Hold her accursèd; or to some poor maid,
Forlorn and trusting, still the tempter comes
And works his wrong, and leaves her in despair
And shame and all abhorrence, while he goes
His way unpunished,—if thou know her eyes
Freeze thee like mine—oh! bid her lose her pain
In succouring others—say to her that Time
And Death have healing hands, and here there comes
To the forgiven transgressor only pain
Enough to chasten joy!"
And a soft tear
Trembled within her eyes, and her sweet gaze
Was as the Magdalen's, the horror gone
And a great radiance come.

Then as I passed
To upper air, I saw two figures rise
Together, one a woman with a grave
Fair face not all unhappy, and the robes
And presence of a queen; and with her walked
The fairest youth that ever maiden's dream
Conceived. And as they came, the throng of ghosts,
For these who were not wholly ghosts, arose,
And did them homage. Not the bond of love
Bound them, but such calm kinship as is bred
Of long and difficult pilgrimages borne
Through common perils by two souls which share
A common weary exile. Nor as ghosts
These showed, but rather like two lives which hung
Suspended in a trance. A halo of life

Played round them, and they brought
a sweet brisk air
Tasting of earth and heaven, like
sojourners
Who stayed but for awhile, and knew
a swift
Release await them. First the youth
it was
Who spake thus as they passed:
"Dread Queen, once more
I feel life stir within me, and my blood
Run faster, while a new strange cycle
turns
And grows completed. Soon on the
dear earth,
Under the lively light of fuller day,
I shall revive me of my wound; and
thou,
Passing with me yon cold and lifeless
stream,
And the grim monster who will fawn
on thee,
Shalt issue in royal pomp, and wreathed
with flowers,
Upon the cheerful earth, leaving behind
A deeper winter for the ghosts who
dwell
Within these sunless haunts; and I
shall lie
Once more within loved arms, and thou
shalt see
Thy early home, and kiss thy mother's
cheek,
And be a girl again. But not for long;
For ere the bounteous Autumn spreads
her hues
Of gold and purple, a cold voice will
call
And bring us to these wintry lands once
more,
As erst so often. Blest are we, indeed,
Above the rest, and yet I would I knew
The careless joys of old.
For in hot youth,
Oh, it was sweet to greet the balmy
night
That was love's nurse, and feel the
weary eyes
Closed by soft kisses,—sweet at early
dawn
To wake refreshed and, scarce from
loving arms
'Scaping, to ride afield, with winding
horn,
By dewy heath and brake, and taste
the fair
Young breath of early morning; and
'twas sweet
To chase the bounding quarry all day
long
With my good hounds and trusty steed,
and gay
Young comrades of my youth, and with
the eve
To turn home laden with the spoil, and
take
The banquet which awaited, and sweet
wine
Poured out, and kisses pressed on
loving lips;
Circled by snowy arms. Oh, it was
sweet
To be alive and young!
For sure it is
The gods gave not quick pulses and
hot blood
And strength and beauty for no end,
but would
That we should use them wisely; and
the fair,
Sweet mistress of my service was,
indeed,
Worthy of all observance. Oh, her
eyes
When I lay bleeding! All day long
we rode,

I and my youthful peers, with horse and hound,
And knew the joy of swift pursuit and toil
And peril. At the last, a fierce boar turned
At bay, and with his gleaming tusks o'erthrew
My steed, and as I fell upon the flowers,
Pierced me as with a sword. Then, as I lay,
I knew the strange slow chill which, stealing, tells
The young that it is death. Yet knew I not
Or pain or fear, only great pity, indeed,
That she should lose her love, who was so fond
And gracious. But when, lifting my dim gaze,
I saw her bend o'er me,—the lovely eyes
Suffused with tears, and her sweet smile replaced
By sweeter sorrow,—for a while I stayed
Life's ebbing tide, and raised my cold, white lips,
With a faint smile, to hers. Then, with a kiss—
One long last kiss, we mingled, and I knew
No more.
But even in death, so strong is Love,
I could not wholly die; and year by year,
When the flowered Spring returns, and the earth lives,
Love opens these dread gates, and calls me forth
Across the gulf. Not here, indeed, she comes,
Being a goddess and in heaven, but smooths
My path to the old earth, where still I know
Once more the dear lost days, and once again
Blossom on that soft breast, and am again
A youth, and rapt in love; and yet not all
As careless as of yore; but seem to know
The early spring of passion, tamed by time
And suffering, to a calmer, fuller flow,
Less fitful, but more strong."
Then the sad Queen:
"Fair youth, thy lot I know, for I am old
As the old earth and yet as young as is
The budding spring, and I was here a Queen,
When Love was not or Time, and to my arms
Thou camèst as a little child, to dwell
Within the halls of Death, for without Death
There were nor Birth nor Love, nor would Life yearn
To lose itself within another life,
And dying, to be born. I, too, have died
For love in part, and live again through love;
For in the far-off years, when Time was young,
And Love unborn on earth, and Zeus in heaven
Ruled, a young sovereign; I, a maiden, dwelt
With loved Demeter on the sunny plains

Of our own Sicily. There, day by day,
I sported with my playmate goddesses,
In virgin freedom. Budding age made gay
Our lightsome feet, and on the flowery slopes
We wandered daily, gathering flowers to weave
In careless garlands for our locks, and passed
The days in innocent gladness. Thought of Love
There came not to us, for as yet the earth
Was virginal, nor yet had Eros come
With his delicious pain.
And one fair morn—
Not all the ages blot it—on the side
Of Ætna we were straying. There was then
Summer nor winter, springtide nor the time
Of harvest, but the soft unfailing sun
Shone always, and the sowing time was one
With reaping; fruit and flower together glowed
Upon the trees; and blade and ripened ear
Together clothed the plains. There, as I strayed,
Sudden a black cloud down the rugged side
Of Ætna, mixed with fire and dreadful sound
Of thunder, rolled around me, and I heard
The maids who were my fellows turn and flee
With shrieks and cries for me.
But I, I knew
No terror while the god o'ershadowed me,
Hiding my life in his, nor when I wept,
My flowers all withered, and my blood ran slow
Within a wintry land. Some voice there was
Which said, 'Fear not. Thou shalt return and see
Thy mother again, only a little while
Fate wills that thou shouldst tarry, and become
Queen of another world. Thou seest that all
Thy flowers are faded. They shall live again
On earth, as thou shalt, as thou livest now
The Life of Death—for what is Death but Life
Suspended as in sleep? The primal rule
Where life was constant, and the sun o'erhead,
Blazed forth unchanging, changes and is hidden
Awhile. This region which thou seest, where all
The trees are lifeless, and the flowers are dead,
Is but the self-same earth on which erewhile
Thou sportedst fancy free.'
So, without fear
I wandered on this bare land, seeing far
Upon the sky the peaks of my own hills
And crests of my own woods. Till, when I grew
Hungered, ere yet another form I saw;
Along the silent alleys journeying,
And leafless groves; a fair and mystic tree
Rose like a heart in shape, and 'mid its leaves
One golden mystic fruit with a fair seed

Hid in it. This, with childish hand, I took
And ate, and straight I knew the tree was Life,
And the fruit Death, and the hid seed was Love.

Ah, sweet strange fruit! the which if any taste
They may no longer keep their lives of old
Or their own selves unchanged, but some weird change
And subtle alchemy comes which can transmute
The blood, and mould the spirits of gods and men
In some new magical form. Not as before,
Our life comes to us, though the passion cools,
Nay, never as before. My mother came
Too late to seek me. She had power to raise
A life from out Death's grasp, but from the arms
Of Love she might not take me, nor undo
Love's past for all her strength. She came and sought
With fires her daughter over land and sea,
Beyond the paths of all the setting stars,
In vain, and over all the earth in vain,
Seeking whom love disguised. Then on all lands
She cast the spell of barrenness; the wheat
Was blighted in the ear, the purple grapes
Blushed no more on the vines, and all the gods
Were sorrowful, seeing the load of ill
My rape had laid on men. Last, Zeus himself,
Pitying the evil that was done, sent forth
His messenger beyond the western rim
To fetch me back to earth.
But not the same
He found me who had eaten of Love's seed,
But changed into another; nor could his power
Prevail to keep me wholly on the earth,
Or make me maid again. The wintry life
Is homelier often than the summer blaze
Of happiness unclouded; so, when Spring
Comes on the world, I, coming, cross with thee,
Year after year, the cruel icy stream;
And leave this anxious sceptre and the shades
Of those in hell, or those for whom, though blest,
No Spring comes, till the last great Spring which brings
New heavens and new earth; and lay my head
Upon my mother's bosom, and grow young,
And am a girl again.
A soft air breathes
Across the stream and fills these barren fields
With the sweet odours of the earth. I know
Again the perfume of the violets
Which bloom on Ætna's side. Soon we shall pass
Together to our home, while round our feet
The crocus flames like gold, the wind-flowers white

Wave their soft petals on the breeze, and all
The choir of flowers lift up their silent song
To the unclouded heavens. Thou, fair boy,
Shalt lie within thy love's white arms again,
And I within my mother's. Sweet is Love
In ceasing and renewal; nay, in these
It lives and has its being. Thou couldst not keep
Thy youth as now, if always on the breast
Of love too late a lingerer thou hadst known
Possession sate thee. Nor might I have kept
My mother's heart, if I had lived to ripe
And wither on the stalk. Time calls and Change
Commands both men and gods, and speeds us on
We know not whither; but the old earth smiles
Spring after Spring, and the seed bursts again
Out of its prison mould, and the dead lives
Renew themselves, and rise aloft and soar
And are transformed, clothing themselves with change
Till the last change be done."
As thus she spake,
I saw a gleam of light flash from the eyes
Of all the listening shades, and a great joy
Thrill through the realms of Death.

And then again
A youthful shade I saw, a comely boy,
With lip and cheek just touched with manly down,
And strong limbs wearing Spring; in mien and garb
A youthful chieftain, with a perfect face
Of fresh young beauty, clustered curls divine,
And chiselled features like a sculptured god,
But warm and breathing life; only the eyes,
The fair large eyes, were full of dreaming thought,
And seemed to gaze beyond the world of sight,
On a hid world of beauty. Him I stayed,
Accosting with soft words of courtesy:
And, on a bank of scentless flowers reclined,
He answered thus:
"Not for the garish sun
I long, nor for the splendours of high noon
In this dim land I languish: for of yore
Full often, when the swift chase swept along
Through the brisk morn, or when my comrades called
To wrestling, or the foot-race, or to cleave
The sunny stream, I loved to walk apart,
Self-centred, sole; and when the laughing girls
To some fair stripling's oaten melody
Made ready for the dance, I heeded not;
Nor when to the loud trumpet's blast and blare

My peers rode forth to battle. For, one eve,
In Latmos, after a long day in June,
I stayed to rest me on a sylvan hill,
Where often youth and maid were wont to meet
Toward moonrise; and deep slumber fell on me
Musing on Love, just as the ruddy orb
Rose on the lucid night, set in a frame
Of blooming myrtle and sharp tremulous plane;
Deep slumber fell, and loosed my limbs in rest.

Then, as the full orb poised upon the peak,
There came a lovely vision of a maid,
Who seemed to step as from a silvery skiff
Out of the low-hung moon. No mortal form,
Such as ofttimes of yore I knew and clasped
At twilight 'mid the vines at the mad feast
Of Dionysus, or the fair maids cold
Who streamed in white processions to the shrine
Of the chaste Virgin Goddess; but a shape
Richer and yet more pure. No thinnest veil
Obscured her; but each exquisite limb revealed,
She seemed an ivory statue subtly wrought
By a great sculptor on the architrave
Of some high temple-front—only in her
The form was soft and loving, breathing life,
And tender. As I seemed to gaze on her,
Nearer she drew and gazed; and as I lay
Supine, beneath her spell, the radiance stooped
And kissed me on the lips, a chaste, sweet kiss,
Which drew my spirit with it. So I slept
Each night upon the hill, until the Dawn
Came in his golden chariot from the East,
And chased my Love away. But ever thus
Dissolved in love as in a heaven-sent dream,
Whenever the bright circle of the moon
Climbed from the hills, whether in leafy June
Or harvest-tide, or when they leapt and pressed
Red-thighed the spouting must, I walked apart
From all, and took no thought for mortal maid,
Nor nimble joys of youth; but night by night
I stole, when all were sleeping, to the hill,
And slumbered and was blest; until I grew
Possest by love so deep, I seemed to live
In slumbers only, while the waking day
Showed faint as any vision.
So I grew
Paler and feebler with the months, and climbed
The steep with laboured steps and difficult breath,
But still I climbed. Ay, though the wintry frost
Chained fast the streams and whitened all the fields,

I sought my mistress through the leafless groves,
And slumbered and was happy, till the dawn
Returning found me stretched out, cold and stark,
With life's fire nigh burnt out. Till one clear night,
When the birds shivered in the pines, and all
The inner heavens stood open, lo! she came,
Brighter and kinder still, and kissed my eyes
And half-closed lips, and drew my soul through them,
And in one precious ecstasy dissolved
My life. And thenceforth, ever on the hill
I lie unseen of man; a cold, white form,
Still young, through all the ages; but my soul,
Wearing this thin presentment of old days,
Walks this dim land, where never moonrise comes,
Nor day-break, but a twilight waiting-time,
No more; and, ah! how weary! Yet I judge
My lot a higher far than his who spends
His youth on swift hot pleasure, quickly past;
Or theirs, my equals', who through long calm years
Grew sleek in dull content of wedded lives
And fair-grown offspring. Many a day for them,
While I was wandering here, and my bones bleached
Upon the rocks, the sweet autumnal sun
Beamed, and the grapes grew purple. Many a day
They heaped up gold, they knelt at festivals,
They waxed in high report and fame of men,
They gave their girls in marriage; while for me
Upon the untrodden peaks, the cold, grey morn,
The snows, the rains, the winds, the untempered blaze,
Beat year by year, until I turned to stone,
And the great eagles shrieked at me, and wheeled
Affrighted. Yet I judge it better indeed
To seek in life, as now I know I sought,
Some fair impossible Love, which slays our life,
Some fair ideal raised too high for man;
And failing to grow mad, and cease to be,
Than to decline, as they do who have found
Broad-paunched content and weal and happiness:
And so an end. For one day, as I know,
The high aim unfulfilled fulfils itself;
The deep, unsatisfied thirst is satisfied;
And through this twilight, broken suddenly,
The inmost heaven, the lucent stars of God,
The Moon of Love, the Sun of Life; and I,
I who pine here—I on the Latmian hill
Shall soar aloft and find them."
With the word,
There beamed a shaft of dawn athwart the skies,

And straight the sentinel thrush within the yew
Sang out reveillé to the hosts of day,
Soldierly; and the pomp and rush of life
Began once more, and left me there alone
Amid the awaking world.

Nay, not alone.
One fair shade lingered in the fuller day,
The last to come, when now my dream had grown
Half mixed with waking thoughts, as grows a dream
In summer mornings when the broader light
Dazzles the sleeper's eyes; and is most fair
Of all and best remembered, and becomes
Part of our waking life, when older dreams
Grow fainter, and are fled. So this remained
The fairest of the visions that I knew,
Most precious and most dear.
The increasing light
Shone through her, finer than the thinnest shade,
And yet most full of beauty; golden wings,
From her fair shoulders springing, seemed to raise
Her stainless feet from the gross earth and lift
Their wearer into air; and in her eyes
Was such fair glance as comes from virgin love,
Long chastened and triumphant. Every soil
Of life had vanished from her, and she showed
As one who walks a saint already on earth,
Virgin or mother. Immortality
Breathed from those radiant eyes which yet had passed
Between the gates of death. I seemed to hear
The Soul of mortals speaking:
"I was born
Of a great race and mighty, and was grown
Fair, as they said, and good, and kept a life
Pure from all stain of passion. Love I knew not,
Who was absorbed in duty; and the Queen
Of gods and men, seeing my life more calm
Than human, hating my impassive heart,
Sent down her perfect son in wrath to earth,
And bade him break me.
But when Eros came,
It did repent him of the task, for Love
Is kin to Duty.
And within my life
I knew miraculous change, and a soft flame
Wherefrom the snows of Duty flushed to rose,
And the chill icy depths of mind were stirred
By a warm tide of passion. Long I lived
Not knowing what had been, nor recognized
A Presence walking with me through my life,
As if by night, his face and form concealed:

A gracious voice alone, which none but I
Might hear, sustained me, and its name was Love.

Not as the earthly loves which throb and flush
Round earthly shrines was mine, but a pure spirit,
Lovelier than all embodied love, more pure
And wonderful; but never on his eyes
I looked, which still were hidden, and I knew not
The fashion of his nature; for by night,
When visual eyes are blind, but the soul sees,
Came he, and bade me think not to make search
Or whence he came or wherefore. Nor knew I
His name. And always ere the coming day,
As if he were the Sun-god, lingering
With some too well-loved maiden, he would rise
And vanish until eve. But all my being
Thrilled with my fair unearthly visitant
To higher duty and more glorious meed
Of action than of old, for it was Love
That came to me, who might not know his name.

Thus, ever rapt by dreams divine, I knew
The scorn that comes from weaker souls, which miss,
Being too low of nature, the great joy
Revealed to others higher; nay, my sisters,
Who being of one blood with me, made choice
To tread the flowery ways of daily life,
Grew jealous of me, bidding me take heed
Lest haply 'twas some monstrous fiend I loved,
Such as in fable ofttimes sought and won
The innocent hearts of maids. Long time I held
My love too dear for doubt, who was so sweet
And lovable. But at the last the sneers,
The mystery which hid him, the swift flight
Before the coming dawn, the shape concealed,
The curious girlish heart, these worked on me
With an unsatisfied thirst. Not his own words:
'Dear, I am with thee only while I keep
My visage hidden; and if thou once shouldst see
My face, I must forsake thee: the high gods
Link Love with Faith, and he withdraws himself
From the full gaze of Knowledge'—not even these
Could cure me of my longing, or the fear
Those mocking voices worked: who fain would learn
The worst that might befall.
And one sad night,
Just ere the day leapt from the hills and brought
The hour when he should go: with tremulous hands,
Lighting my midnight lamp in fear, I stood
Long time uncertain, and at length turned round
And gazed upon my love. He lay asleep,
And oh, how fair he was! The flickering light

Fell on the fairest of the gods, stretched out
In happy slumber. Looking on his locks
Of gold, and faultless face and smile, and limbs
Made perfect, a great joy and trembling took me
Who was most blest of women, and in awe
And fear I stooped to kiss him. One warm drop—
From the full lamp within my trembling hand,
Or a glad tear from my too happy eyes,
Fell on his shoulder.
Then the god unclosed
His lovely eyes, and with great pity spake:
'Farewell! There is no Love except with Faith,
And thine is dead! Farewell! I come no more.'
And straightway from the hills the full red sun
Leapt up, and as I clasped my love again,
The lovely vision faded from his place,
And came no more.
Then I, with breaking heart,
Knowing my life laid waste by my own hand,
Went forth and would have sought to hide my life
Within the stream of Death; but Death came not
To aid me who not yet was meet for Death.

Then finding that Love came not back to me,
I thought that in the temples of the gods
Haply he dwelt, and so from fane to fane
I wandered over earth, and knelt in each,
Enquiring for my Love; and I would ask
The priests and worshippers, 'Is this Love's shrine?
Sirs, have you seen the god?' But never at all
I found him. For some answered, 'This is called
The Shrine of Knowledge;' and another, 'This,
The Shrine of Beauty;' and another, 'Strength;'
And yet another, 'Youth.' And I would kneel
And say a prayer to my Love, and rise
And seek another. Long, o'er land and sea,
I wandered, till I was not young or fair,
Grown wretched, seeking my lost Love; and last,
Came to the smiling, hateful shrine where ruled
The queen of earthly love and all delight,
Cypris, but knelt not there, but asked of one
Who seemed her priest, if Eros dwelt with her.

Then to the subtle-smiling goddess' self
They led me. She with hatred in her eyes:
'What! thou to seek for Love, who art grown thin
And pale with watching! He is not for thee.
What Love is left for such? Thou didst despise
Love, and didst dwell apart. Love sits within
The young maid's eyes, making them beautiful.

Love is for youth, and joy, and happiness;
And not for withered lives. Ho! bind her fast.
Take her and set her to the vilest tasks,
And bend her pride by solitude and tears,
Who will not kneel to me, but dares to seek
A disembodied love. My son has gone
And left thee for thy fault, and thou shalt know
The misery of my thralls.
Then in her house
They bound me to hard tasks and vile, and kept
My life from honour, chained among her slaves
And lowest ministers, taking despite
And injury for food, and set to bind
Their wounds whom she had tortured, and to feed
The pitiful lives which in her prisons pent
Languished in hopeless pain. There is no sight
Of suffering but I saw it, and was set
To succour it; and all my woman's heart
Was torn with the ineffable miseries
Which love and life have worked; and dwelt long time
In groanings and in tears.
And then, oh joy!
Oh miracle! once more again at length
I felt Love's arms around me, and the kiss
Of Love upon my lips, and in the chill
Of deepest prison cells, 'mid vilest tasks,
The glow of his sweet breath, and the warm touch
Of his invisible hand, and his sweet voice,
Ay, sweeter than of old, and tenderer,
Speak to me, pierce me, hold me, fold me round
With arms Divine, till all the sordid earth
Was hued like heaven, and Life's dull prison-house
Turned to a golden palace, and those low tasks
Grew to be higher works and nobler gains
Than any gains of knowledge, and at last
He whispered softly, 'Dear, unclose thine eyes,
Thou mayst look on me now. I go no more,
But am thine own for ever.'
Then with wings
Of gold we soared, I looking in his eyes,
Over yon dark broad river, and this dim land,
Scarce for an instant staying till we reached
The inmost courts of heaven.
But sometimes still
I come here for a little, and speak a word
Of peace to those who wait. The slow wheel turns,
The cycles round themselves and grow complete,
The world's year whitens to the harvest-tide,
And one word only am I sent to say
To those dear souls, who wait here, or who now
Breathe earthly air — one universal word
To all things living, and the word is 'Love.'"

Then soared she visibly before my gaze,
And the heavens took her, and I knew my eyes
Had seen the Soul of man, the deathless Soul,
Defeated, struggling, purified, and blest.

Then all the choir of happy waiting shades,
Heroes and queens, fair maidens and brave youths,
Swept by me, rhythmic, slow, as if they trod
Some unheard measure, passing where I stood
In fair procession, each with a faint smile
Upon the lip, signing "Farewell, oh shade!
It shall be well with thee, as 'tis with us,
If only thou art true. The world of Life,
The world of Death, are but opposing sides
Of one great orb, and the Light shines on both.
Oh, happy, happy shade! Farewell! Farewell!"
And so they passed away.

BOOK III.

OLYMPUS.

But I, my gaze
Following the soaring soul which now was lost
In the awakening skies, floated with her,
As in a trance, beyond the golden gates
Which separate Earth from Heaven; and to my thought,
Gladdened by that broad effluence of light,
This old earth seemed transfigured, and the fields,
So dim and bare, grew green and clothed themselves
With lustrous hues. A fine ethereal air
Played round me as I mused, and filled the soul
With an ineffable content. What help
In words to tell of things unreached by words?
Or how to engrave upon the treacherous thought
The fair and fugitive fancies of a dream,
Which vanish ere we fix them?
But methinks
He knows the scene, who knows the one fair day,
One only and no more, which year by year
In springtime comes, when lingering winter flies,
And lo! the bare boughs prankt with white and pink,
And golden clusters, and the green glades starred
With delicate primrose and deep odorous beds
Of violets, and on the tufted meads
With kingcups lit, and cowslip bells, and blue
Sweet hyacinths, and frail anemones,
The broad West wind breathes softly, and the air

Is tremulous with the lark, and thro' the woods
The soft full-throated thrushes all day long
Flood the green dells with joy, and thro' the dry
Brown fields the sower strides, sowing his seed,
And all is life and song. Or he who first,
Whether in fair free boyhood, when the world
Is his to choose, or when his fuller life
Beats to another life, or afterwards,
Keeping his youth within his children's eyes,
Looks on the snow-clad everlasting hills,
And marks the sunset smite them, and is glad
Of the beautiful fair world.
A springtide land
It seemed, where East winds came not. Sweetest song
Was everywhere, by glade or sunny plain;
And thro' the golden valleys winding streams
Rippled in glancing silver, and above,
The blue hills rose, and over all a peak,
White, awful, with a constant fleece of cloud
Veiling its summit, towered. Unfailing Day
Lighted it, for no turn of dawn and eve
Came there, nor changing seasons, but a broad
Fixed joy of Being, undisturbed by Time.

There, in a happy glade shut in by groves
Of laurel and sweet myrtle, on a green
And flower-lit lawn, I seemed to see the ghosts
Of the old gods. Upon the gentle slope
Of a fair hill, a joyous company,
The Immortals lay. Hard by, a murmurous stream
Fell through the flowers; below them, space on space,
Laughed the immeasurable plains; beyond,
The mystic mountain soared. Height after height
Of bare rock ledges left the climbing pines,
And reared their giddy, shining terraces
Into the ethereal air. Above, the snows
Of the white summit cleft the fleece of cloud
Which always clothed it round.
Ah, fair and sweet,
Yet with a ghostly fairness, fine and thin,
Those godlike Presences. Not dreams indeed,
But something dream-like, were they. Blessed Shades
Heroic and Divine, as when, in days
When Man was young, and Time, the vivid thought
Translated into Form the unattained
Impossible Beauty of men's dreams, and fixed
The Loveliness in marble.
As with awe
Following my spotless guide, I stood apart,
Not daring to draw near; a shining form
Rose from the throng, and floated, light as air,
To where I trembled. And I knew the face
And form of Artemis, the fair, the pure,
The undefiled. A crescent silvery moon

Shone thro' her locks, and by her side she bore
A quiver of golden darts. At sight of whom
I felt a sudden chill, like his who once
Looked upon her and died; yet could not fear,
Seeing how fair she was. Her sweet voice rang
Clear as a bird's:
"Mortal, what fate hath brought
Thee hither, uncleansed by death? How canst thou breathe
Immortal air, being mortal! Yet fear not,
Since thou art come. For we too are of earth
Whom here thou seest: there were not a heaven
Were there no earth, nor gods, had men not been,
But each the complement of each and grown
The other's creature, is and has its being,
A double essence, Human and Divine.
So that the God is hidden in the man,
And something Human bounds and forms the God;
Which else had shown too great and undefined
For mortal sight, and having no human eye
To see it, were unknown. But we who bore
Sway of old time, we were but attributes
* Of the great God who is all Things that be—
The Pillar of the Earth and starry Sky,
The Depth of the great Deep; the Sun, the Moon,
The Word which Makes; the All-compelling Love—

* See the Orphic Hymns.

For all Things lie within His Infinite Form."

Even as she spake, a throng of shapes divine
Floated around me, filling all my soul
With fair unearthly beauty, and the air
With such ambrosial perfume as is born,
When morning breathes upon a tropic sea,
From boundless wastes of flowers; and as I knelt
In rapture, lo! the same clear voice again
From out the throng of gods:
"Those whom thou seest
Were even as I, embodiments of Him
Who is the Centre of all Life: myself
The Maiden-Queen of Purity; and Strength,
Divine when unabused; Love too, the Spring
And Cause of Things; and Knowledge, which lays bare
Their secret; and calm Duty, Queen of all,
And Motherhood in one; and Youth, which bears,
Beauty of Form and Life and Light, and breathes
The breath of Inspiration; and the Soul,
The particle of God, sent down to man,
Which doth in turn reveal the world and God.

Wherefore it is men called on Artemis,
The refuge of young souls; for still in age
They keep some dim reflection uneffaced
Of a Diviner Purity than comes
To the spring days of youth, when all the world

Smiles, and the rapid blood thro' the young veins
Courses, and all is glad; yet knowing too
That innocence is young—before the soil
And smirch of sadder knowledge, settling on it,
Sully its primal whiteness. So they knelt
At my white shrines, the eager boyish souls,
To whom life's road showed like a dewy field
In early summer dawns, when to the sound
Of youth's clear voice, and to the cheerful rush
Of the tumultuous feet and clamorous tongues
Careering onwards, fair and dappled fawns,
Strange birds with jewelled plumes, fierce spotted pards,
Rise in the joyous chase, to be caught and slain
By the young conqueror; nor yet the charm
Of sensual ease allures. And they knelt too,
The pure sweet maidens fair and fancy-free,
Whose innocent virgin hearts shrank from the touch
Of passion as from wrong—sweet moon-lit lives
Which fade, and pale, and vanish, in the glare
Of Love's hot noontide: these came robed in white,
With holy hymns and soaring liturgies:
And so men fabled me, a huntress now,
Borne thro' the flying woodlands, fair and free;
And now the pale cold Moon, Light without warmth,
Zeal without touch of passion, heavenly love
For human, and the altar for the home.

But oh, how sweet it was to take the love
And awe of my young worshippers; to watch
The pure young gaze and hear the pure young voice
Mount in the hymn, or see the gay troop come
With the first dawn of day, brushing the dew
From the unpolluted fields, and wake to song
The slumbering birds; strong in their innocence!
I did not envy any goddess of all
The Olympian company her votaries!
Ah, happy days of old which now are gone!
A memory and a dream! for now on earth
I rule no longer o'er young willing hearts
In voluntary fealty, which would cease
When Love, with fiery accents calling, woke
The slumbering soul; as now it should for those
Who kneel before the purer, sadder shrine
Which has replaced my own. But ah! too oft,
Not always, but too often, shut from life
Within pale life-long cloisters and the bars
Of hopeless convent prisons, year by year,

Age after age, the white souls fade and pine
Which simulate the joyous service free
Of those young worshippers. I would that I
Might loose the captives' chain; or Herakles,
Who was a mortal once."

But he who stood
Colossal at my side:
"I toil no more
On earth, nor wield again the mighty strength
Which Zeus once gave me for the cure of ill.
I have run my race; I have done my work; I rest
For ever from the toilsome days I gave
To the suffering race of men. And yet, indeed,
Methinks they suffer still. Tyrannous growths
And monstrous vex them still. Pestilence lurks
And sweeps them down. Treacheries come, and wars,
And slay them still. Vaulting ambition leaps
And falls in bloodshed still. But I am here
At rest, and no man kneels to me, or keeps
Reverence for strength mighty yet unabused—
Strength which is Power, God's choicest gift, more rare
And precious than all Beauty, or the charm
Of Wisdom, since it is the instrument
Thro' which all Nature works. For now the earth
Is full of meekness, and a new God rules,
Teaching strange precepts of humility
And mercy and forgiveness. Yet I trow
There is no lack of bloodshed and deceit
And groanings, and the tyrant works his wrong
Even as of old; but now there is no arm
Like mine, made strong by Zeus, to beat him down,
Him and his wrong together. Yet I know
I am not all discrowned. The strong brave souls,
The manly tender hearts, whom tale of wrong
To woman or child, to all weak things and small,
Fires like a blow; kindling the righteous flush
Of anger on the brow; knotting the cords
Of muscle on the arm; with one desire
To hew the spoiler down, and make an end,
And go their way for others; making light
Of toil and pain, and too laborious days,
And peril; beat unchanged, albeit they serve
A Lord of meekness. For the world still needs
Its champion as of old, and finds him still.
Not always now with mighty sinews and thews
Like mine, though still these profit, but keen brain

And voice to move men's souls to love the right
And hate the wrong; even tho' the bodily form
Be weak, of giant strength, strong to assail
The hydra heads of Evil, and to slay
The monsters that now waste them: Ignorance,
Self-seeking, coward fears, the hate of Man,
Disguised as love of God. These labour still
With toil as hard as mine. For what was it
To strive with bodily ills, and do great deeds
Of daring and of strength, and bear the crown,
To his high task who wages lifelong strife
With an impalpable foe; conquering indeed,
But, ere he hears the pæan or sees the pomp
Laid low in the arms of Death? And tho' men cease
To worship at my shrine, yet not the less
It is the toils I knew, the pains I bore
For others, which have kept the steadfast heart
Of manhood undefiled, and nerved the arm
Of sacrifice, and made the martyr strong
To do and bear, and taught the race of men
How godlike 'tis to suffer thro' life, and die
At last for others' good!"
The strong god ceased,
And stood a little, musing; blest indeed,
But bearing, as it seemed, some faintest trace
Of earthly struggle still, not the gay ease
Of the elder heaven-born gods.

And then there came
Beauty and Joy in one, bearing the form
Of woman. How to reach with halting words
That infinite Perfection? All have known
The breathing marbles which the Greek has left
Who saw her near, and strove to fix her charms,
And exquisitely failed; or those fair forms
The Painter offered at a later shrine,
And failed. Nay, what are words?—he knows it well
Who loves, or who has loved.
She with a smile
Playing around her rosy lips; as plays
The sunbeam on a stream:
"Shall I complain
Men kneel to me no longer, taking to them
Some graver, sterner worship; grown too wise
For fleeting joys of Love? Nay, Love is Youth,
And still the world is young. Still shall I reign
Within the hearts of men, while Time shall last
And Life renews itself. All Life that is,
From the weak things of earth or sea or air,

Which creep or float for an hour; to godlike man—
All know me and are mine. I am the source
And mother of all, both gods and men; the spring
Of Force and Joy, which, penetrating all
Within the hidden depths of the Unknown,
Sets the blind germ of Being, and from the bond
Of incomplete and dual Essences
Evolves the harmony which is Life. The world
Were dead without my rays, who am the Light
Which vivifies the world. Nay, but for me,
The universal order which attracts
Sphere unto sphere, and keeps them in their paths
For ever, were no more. All things are bound
Within my golden chain, whose name is Love.

And if there be, indeed, some sterner souls
Or sunk in too much learning, or hedged round
By care and greed, or haply too much rapt
By pale ascetic fervours, to delight
To kneel to me, the universal voice
Scorns them as those who, spurning wilfully
The good that Nature offers, dwell unblest
Who might be blest, but would not. Every voice
Of bard in every age has hymned me. All
The breathing marbles, all the glowing hues
Of painting, praise me. Even the loveless shades
Of dim monastic cloisters show some gleam,
Tho' faint, of me. Amid the busy throngs
Of cities reign I, and o'er lonely plains,
Beyond the ice-fields of the frozen North
And the warm waves of undiscovered seas.

For I was born out of the sparkling foam
Which lights the crest of the blue mystic wave,
Stirred by the wandering breath of Life's pure dawn
From a young soul's clear depths. There, without voice,
Stretched on the breathing curve of a young breast,
Fluttering a little, flesh from the great deep
Of life, and creamy as the opening rose,
Naked I lie, naked yet unashamed,
While youth's warm tide steals round me with a kiss,
And floods each limb with fairness. Shame I know not—
Shame is for wrong, and not for innocence—
The veil which Error grasps to hide itself
From the awful Eye. But I, I lie unveiled
And unashamed—the livelong day I lie,
The warm wave murmuring to me; and, all night,

Hidden in the moonlit caves of happy Sleep,
I dream until the morning and am glad.

Why should I seek to clothe myself, and hide
The treasure of my Beauty? Shame may wait
On those for whom 'twas given. The sties of sense
Are none of mine; the brutish, loveless wrong,
The venal charm, the simulated flush
Of fleshly passion, they are none of mine,
Only corruptions of me. Well I know
The counterfeit the stronger, since gross souls
And brutish sway the earth; yet not the less
All sense is consecrated, and I deem
'Twere better to grow soft and sink in sense
Than gloat o'er blood and wrong.

My kingdom is
O'er infinite grades of life. Yet 'tis in man
I find my worthiest worship. Where man is,
A youth and a maid, a youth and a maid, nought else
Is wanting for my temple. Every clime
Kneels to me—the long breaker falls in foam
Under the palms, swelling the merry noise
Of savage bridals, and the straight brown limbs
Know me, and over all the endless plains
I reign, and by the tents on the hot sand
And sea-girt isles am queen, and by the sides
Of silent mountains, where the white cots gleam
Upon the green hill pastures, and no sound
But the thunder of the avalanche is borne
To the listening rocks around; and by fair lands
Where all is peace; where thro' the happy hush
Of tranquil summer evenings, 'mid the corn,
Or thro' cool arches of the gadding vines,
The lovers stray together hand in hand,
Hymning my praise; and by the echoing streets
Of stately cities—o'er the orbèd earth,
The burning South, the icy North, the old
And immemorial East, the unbounded West,
No new god comes to spoil me utterly—
All worship and are mine!'
With a sweet smile
Upon her rosy mouth, the goddess ceased;
And when she spake no more, the silence weighed
As heavy on my soul as when it takes
Some gracious melody, and leaves the ear
Unsatisfied and longing, till the fount
Of sweetness springs again.

But while I stood
Expectant, lo! a fair pale form drew near
With front severe, and wide blue eyes which bore
Mild wisdom in their gaze. Clear purity
Shone from her—not the young-eyed innocence
Of her whom first I saw, but that which comes
From wider knowledge, which restrains the tide
Of passionate youth, and leads the musing soul
By the calm deeps of Wisdom. And I knew
My eyes had seen the fair, the virgin Queen,
Who once within her shining Parthenon
Beheld the sages kneel.
She with clear voice
And coldly sweet, yet with a softness too,
Such as befits a virgin:
"She doth right
To boast her sway, my sister, seeing indeed
That all things are as by a double law,
And from a double root the tree of Life
Springs up to the face of heaven. Body and Soul,
Matter and Spirit, lower joys of Sense
And higher joys of Thought, I know that both
Build up the shrine of Being. The brute sense
Leaves man a brute; but, winged with soaring thought
Mounts to high heaven. The unembodied spirit,
Dwelling alone, unmated, void of sense,
Shows impotent. And yet I know there is,
Far off, but not too far for mortal reach,
A calmer height, where, nearer to the stars,
Thought sits alone and gazes with rapt gaze,
A large-eyed maiden in a robe of white,
Who brings the light of Knowledge down, and draws
To her pontifical eyes a bridge of gold,
Which spans from earth to heaven.
For what were life,
If things of sense were all, for those large souls
And high, whom grudging Nature has shut fast
Within unlovely forms, or from whose life
The circuit of the rapid gliding years
Steals the brief gift of beauty? Shall men hold
With idle singers, all the treasure of hope
Is lost with youth — swift-fleeting, treacherous youth,
Which fades and flies before the ripening brain
Crowns life with Wisdom's crown? Nay, even in youth,
Is it not more to tread the difficult heights
Alone—the cold free heights—and mark the vale
Lie breathless in the glare, or hidden and blurred
By cloud and storm; or pestilence and war
Creep on with blood and death; while the soul dwells
Apart upon the peaks, outfronts the sun
As the eagle does, or takes the coming dawn

While all the vale is dark, and knows the springs
Of tiny rivulets hurrying from the snows,
Which soon shall swell to vast resistless floods,
And feed the Oceans which divide the World?

Oh, ecstasy! oh, wonder! oh, delight!
Which neither the slow-withering wear of Time,
That takes all else—the smooth and rounded cheek
Of youth; the lightsome step; the warm young heart
Which beats for love or friend; the treasure of hope
Immeasurable; the quick-coursing blood
Which makes it joy to be,—ay, takes them all
Or makes them naught—nor yet satiety
Born of too full possession, takes or mars!
Oh, fair delight of learning! which grows great
And stronger and more keen, for slower limbs,
And dimmer eyes and loneliness, and loss
Of lower good—wealth, friendship, ay, and Love—
When the swift soul, turning its weary gaze
From the old vanished joys, projects itself
Into the void and floats in empty space,
Striving to reach the mystic source of Things,
The secrets of the earth and sea and air,
The Law that binds the process of the suns,
The awful depths of Mind and Thought; the prime
Unfathomable mystery of God!

Is there, then, any who holds my worship cold
And lifeless? Nay, but 'tis the light which cheers
The waning life! Love thou thy love, brave youth!
Cleave to thy love, fair maid! it is the Law
Which dominates the world, that bids ye use
Your nature; but, when now the fuller tide
Slackens a little, turn your calmer eyes
To the fair page of Knowledge. It is power
I give, and power is precious. It is strength
To live four-square, careless of outward shows,
And self-sufficing. It is clearer sight
To know the rule of life, the Eternal scheme;
And, knowing it, to do and not to err,
And, doing, to be blest."
The calm voice soared
Higher and higher to the close; the cold
Clear accents, fired as by a hidden fire,
Glowed into life and tenderness, and throbbed
As with some spiritual ecstasy
Sweeter than that of Love.

But as they died,
I heard an ampler voice; and looking, marked

A fair and gracious form. She seemed a Queen
Who ruled o'er gods and men; the majesty
Of perfect womanhood. No opening bud
Of beauty, but the full consummate flower
Was hers; and from her mild large eyes looked forth
Gentle command, and motherhood, and home,
And pure affection. Awe and reverence
O'erspread me, as I knew my eyes had looked
On sovereign Heré, mother of the gods.

She, with clear, rounded utterance, sweet and calm:
"I know the charm of stainless Innocence;
I know Love's fruit is good and fair to see
And taste, if any gain it, and I know
How brief Youth's Passion-tide, which when it ebbs
Leaves Life athirst for Knowledge, and I know
How fair the realm of Mind, where the keen soul
Yearning to rise, wings its impetuous way
Beyond the bounds of Thought; and yet there is
A higher bliss than theirs, which best befits
A mortal life, compact of Body and Soul,
And therefore double-natured—a calm path
Which lies before the feet, thro' common ways
And undistinguished crowds of toiling men,
And yet is hard to tread, tho' seeming smooth,
And yet, tho' level, finds a worthier crown.

For Knowledge is a steep which few may climb,
While Duty is a path which all may tread.
And if the Goal of Life and Thought be this,
How best to speed the mighty scheme, which still
Fares onward day by day—the Life of the World,
Which is the sum of petty lives, that wane
And die so this may live—how then shall each
Of that great multitude of faithful souls
Who walk not on the heights, fulfil himself,
But by the duteous Life which looks not forth
Beyond its narrow sphere, and finds its work,
And works it out; content, this done, to fall
And perish, if Fate will, so the great Scheme
Goes onward?
Wherefore am I Queen in Heaven
And Earth, whose realm is Duty, bearing rule
More constant and more wide than those whose words
Thou heardest last. Mine are the striving souls
Of fathers plodding day by day obscure
And unrewarded, save by their own hearts,
Mid wranglings of the Forum or the mart;
Who long for joys of Thought, and yet must toil

Unmurmuring thro' dull lives from youth to age ;
Who haply might have worn instead the crown
Of Honour and of Fame : mine the fair mothers
Who, for the love of children and of home,
When passion dies, expend their careful years
In loving labour sweetened by the sense
Of Duty : mine the statesman who toils on
Thro' vigilant nights and days, guiding his State,
Yet finds no gratitude ; and those white souls
Who give themselves for others all their years
In trivial tasks of Pity. The fine growths
Of Man and Time are mine, and spend themselves
For me and for the mystical End which lies
Beyond their gaze and mine, and yet is good,
Tho' hidden from men and gods.
For as the flower
Of the tiger-lily gay with varied hues
Is for a day, then fades and leaves behind
Fairness nor fruit, while the green tiny tuft
Swells to the purple of the clustering grape
Or golden waves of wheat ; so lives of men
Which show most splendid, fade and are deceased
And leave no trace ; while those, unmarked, unseen,
Which no man recks of, rear the stately tree
Of Knowledge, not for itself sought out, but found
In the dusty ways of life—a fairer growth
Than springs in cloistered shades ; and from the sum
Of Duty, blooms sweeter and more divine
The fair ideal of the Race, than comes
From glittering gains of Learning.
Life, full life,
Full-flowered, full-fruited, reared from homely earth,
Rooted in duty, and thro' long calm years
Bearing its load of healthful energies ;
Stretching its arms on all sides ; fed with dews
Of cheerful sacrifice, and clouds of care,
And rain of useful tears ; warmed by the sun
Of calm affection, till it breathes itself
In perfume to the heavens—this is the prize
I hold most dear, more precious than the fruit
Of Knowledge or of Love."
The goddess ceased
As dies some gracious harmony, the child
Of wedded themes which single and alone
Were discords, but united breathe a sound
Sweet as the sounds of heaven.

And then stood forth
The last of the gods I saw, the first in place

And dignity and beauty, the young god
Who grows not old, the Light of Heaven and Earth,
The Worker from afar, who darts the fire
Of inspiration on the bard and bathes
The world in hues of heaven—the golden link
Between High God and Man.
With a sweet voice
Whose every note was perfect melody—
The melody has fled, the words remain—
Apollo sang:
"I know how fair the face
Of Purity; I know the treasure of Strength;
I know the charm of Love, the calmer grace
Of Wisdom and of Duteous well-spent lives:
And yet there is a loftier height than these.

There is a Height higher than mortal thought;
There is a Love warmer than mortal love;
There is a Life which, taking not its hues
From Earth or earthly things, grows white and pure
And higher than the petty cares of men,
And is a blessed life and glorified.

Oh, fair young souls, strain upward, upward still,
Even to the heavenly source of Purity!
Brave hearts, bear on and suffer! Strike for right,
Strong arms, and hew down wrong! The world hath need
Of all of you—the sensual, wrongful world!

Hath need of you, and of thee too, fair Love.
Oh, lovers, cling together! the old world
Is full of Hate. Sweeten it; draw in one
Two separate chords of Life; and from the bond
Of twin souls lost in Harmony create
A Fair God dwelling with you—Love the Lord!

Waft yourselves, yearning souls, upon the stars;
Sow yourselves on the wandering winds of space;
Watch patient all your days, if your eyes take
Some dim, cold ray of Knowledge. The dull world
Hath need of you — the purblind, slothful world!

Live on, brave lives, chained to the narrow round
Of Duty; live, expend yourselves, and make
The orb of Being wheel on steadfastly
Upon its path — the Lord of Life alone
Knows to what goal of Good; work on, live on:
And yet there is a higher work than yours.

To have looked upon the face of the Unknown
And Perfect Beauty. To have heard the voice

Of Godhead in the winds and in the seas.
To have known Him in the circling of the suns,
And in the changeful fates and lives of men.

To be fulfilled with Godhead as a cup
Filled with a precious essence, till the hand
On marble or on canvas falling, leaves
Celestial traces, or from reed or string
Draws out faint echoes of the voice Divine
That bring God nearer to a faithless world.

Or, higher still and fairer and more blest,
To be His seer, His prophet; to be the voice
Of the Ineffable Word; to be the glass
Of the Ineffable Light, and bring them down
To bless the earth, set in a shrine of Song.

For Knowledge is a barren tree and bare,
Bereft of God, and Duty but a word,
And Strength but Tyranny, and Love, Desire,
And Purity a folly; and the Soul,
Which brings down God to Man, the Light to the world;
He is the Maker, and is blest, is blest!"

He ended, and I felt my soul grow faint
With too much sweetness. In a mist of grac
They faded, that bright company, and seemed
To melt into each other and shape themselves
Into new forms, and those fair goddesses
Blent in a perfect woman—all the calm
High motherhood of Heré, the sweet smile
Of Cypris, fair Athené's earnest eyes,
And the young purity of Artemis,
Blent in a perfect woman; and in her arms,
Fused by some cosmic interlacing curves
Of Beauty into a new Innocence,
A child with eyes divine, a little child,
A little child—no more.
And those great gods
Of Power and Beauty left a heavenly form
Strong not to act but suffer; fair and meek,
Not proud and eager; with soft eyes of grace,
Not bold with joyous youth; and for the fire
Of song, and for the happy careless life,
A sorrowful pilgrimage—changed, yet the same,
Only Diviner far; and bearing higher
The Life God-lighted and the Sacrifice.

And when these faded wholly, at my side,
Tho' hidden before by those too-radiant forms,
I was aware once more of her, my guide
Psyche, who had not left me, floating near
On golden wings; and all the plains of heaven
were left to us, me and my soul alone.

Then when my thought revived again, I said

Whispering, "But Zeus I saw not, the prime Source
And Sire of all the gods."
And she, bent low
With downcast eyes: "Nay. Thou hast seen of Him
All that thine eyes can bear, in those fair forms
Which are but parts of Him and are indeed
Attributes of the Substance which supports
The Universe of Things—the Soul of the World,
The Stream which flows Eternal, from no Source
Into no Sea. His Purity, His Strength,
His Love, His Knowledge, His unchanging rule
Of Duty, thou hast seen, only a part
And not the whole, being a finite mind
Too weak for infinite thought; nor, couldst thou see
All of Him visible to mortal sight,
Wouldst thou see all His essence, since the gods—
Glorified essences of Human mould,
Who are but Zeus made visible to men—
See Him not wholly, only some thin edge
And halo of His glory; nor know they
What vast and unsuspected Universes
Lie beyond thought, where yet He rules, like those
Vast Suns we cannot see, round which our Sun
Moves with his system, or those darker still
Which not even thus we know, but yet exist
Tho' no eye marks, nor thought itself, and lurk
In the awful Depths of Space; or that which is
Not orbed as yet, but indiscrete, confused,
Sown thro' the void—the faintest gleam of light
Which sets itself to Be. And yet is He
There too, and rules, none seeing. But sometimes
To this our heaven, which is so like to earth
But nearer to Him, for awhile He shows
Some gleam of His own brightness, and methinks
It cometh soon; but thou, if thou shouldst gaze,
Thy Life will rush to His—the tiny spark
Absorbed in that full blaze—and what there is
Of mortal fall from thee."
But I: "Oh, soul,
What holdeth Life more precious than to know
The Giver and to die?"
Then she: "Behold!
Look upward and adore."
And with the word,
Unhasting, undelaying, gradual, sure,
The floating cloud which clothed the hidden peak
Rose slow in awful silence, laying bare
Spire after rocky spire, snow after snow,
Whiter and yet more dreadful, till at last
It left the summit clear.
Then with a bound,
In the twinkling of an eye, in the flash of a thought,
I knew an Awful Effluence of Light,
Formless, Ineffable, Perfect, burst on me

And flood my being round, and draw my life
Into itself. I saw my guide bent down
Prostrate, her wings before her face; and then
No more.

But when I woke from my long trance
Behold, it was no longer Tartarus,
Nor Hades, nor Olympus, but the bare
And unideal aspect of the fields
Which Spring not yet had kissed—the strange old Earth
So far more fabulous now than in the days
When Man was young, nor yet the mystery
Of Time and Fate transformed it. From the hills,
The long night fled at last, the unclouded sun,
The dear, fair sun, leapt upward swift, and smote
My sight with rays of gold, and pierced my brain
With too much light ere my entrancèd eyes
Could hide themselves.
And I was on the Earth
Dreaming the dream of Life again, as late
I dreamed the dream of Death.
Another day
Dawned on the race of men; another world;
New heavens, and new earth.

And as I went
Across the lightening fields, upon a bank
I saw a single snowdrop glance, and bring
Promise of Spring; and keeping my old thought
In the old fair Hellenic vesture dressed,
I felt myself a ghost, and seemed to be
Now fair Adonis hasting to the arms
Of his lost love—now sad Persephone
Restored to mother earth—or that high shade
Orpheus, who gave up heaven to save his love,
And is rewarded—or young Marsyas,
Who spent his youth and life for song, and yet
Was happy though in torture—or the fair
And dreaming youth I saw, who still awaits,
Hopeful, the unveiling heaven, when he shall see
His fair ideal love. The birds sang blithe;
There came a tinkling from the waking fold;
And on the hillside from the cot a girl
Tripped singing with her pitcher. All the sounds
And thoughts which still are beautiful—Youth, Song,
Dawn, Spring, Renewal—and my soul was glad
Of all the freshness, and I felt again
The youth and spring-tide of the world, and thought,
Which feigned those fair and gracious fantasies.

For every dawn that breaks brings a new world,

And every budding bosom a new life;
These fair tales, which we know so beautiful,
Show only finer than our lives to-day
Because their voice was clearer, and they found
A sacred bard to sing them. We are pent,
Who sing to-day, by all the garnered wealth
Of ages of past song. We have no more
The world to choose from, who, where'er we turn,
Tread through old thoughts and fair. Yet must we sing—
We have no choice; and if more hard the toil
In noon, when all is clear, than in the fresh
White mists of early morn, yet do we find
Achievement its own guerdon, and at last
The rounder song of manhood grows more sweet
Than the high note of youth.
For Age, long Age!
Nought else divides us from the fresh young days
Which men call ancient; seeing that we in turn
Shall one day be Time's ancients, and inspire
The wiser, higher race, which yet shall sing
Because to sing is human, and high thought
Grows rhythmic ere its close. Nought else there is
But that weird beat of Time, which doth disjoin
To-day from Hellas.
How should any hold
Those precious scriptures only old-world tales
Of strange impossible torments and false gods;
Of men and monsters in some brainless dream,
Coherent, yet unmeaning, linked together
By some false skein of song?
Nay! evermore,
All things and thoughts, both new and old, are writ
Upon the unchanging human heart and soul.
Has Passion still no prisoners? Pine there now
No lives which fierce Love, sinking into Lust,
Has drowned at last in tears and blood—plunged down
To the blackest depths of Hell? Have not strong Will
And high Ambition rotted into Greed
And Wrong, for any, as of old, and whelmed
The struggling soul in ruin? Hell lies near
Around us as does Heaven, and in the World,
Which is our Hades, still the chequered souls
Compact of good and ill—not all accurst
Nor altogether blest—a few brief years
Travel the little journey of their lives,
They know not to what end. The weary woman
Sunk deep in ease and sated with her life,
Much loved and yet unloving, pines to-day
As Helen; still the poet strives and sings,
And hears Apollo's music, and grows dumb,

And suffers, yet is happy; still the young
Fond dreamer seeks his high ideal love,
And finds her name is Death; still doth the fair
And innocent life, bound naked to the rock,
Redeem the race; still the gay tempter goes
And leaves his victim, stone; still common pain
Binds souls with closer links of nobler love,
Than Death itself can sever; still the sight
Of too great beauty blinds us, and we lose
The sense of earthly splendours, gaining Heaven.

And still the skies are opened as of old
To the entrancèd gaze, ay, nearer far
And brighter than of yore; and Might is there,
And Infinite Purity is there, and high
Eternal Wisdom, and the calm clear face
Of Duty, and a higher, stronger Love
And Light in one, and a new, reverend Name,
Greater than any and combining all;
And over all, veiled with a veil of cloud,
God set far off, too bright for mortal eyes.

And always, always, with each soul that comes
And goes, comes that fair form which was my guide,
Hovering, with golden wings and eyes divine,
Above the bed of birth, the bed of death,
Still breathing heavenly airs of deathless love.

For while a youth is lost in soaring thought,
And while a maid grows sweet and beautiful,
And while a spring-tide coming lights the earth,
And while a child, and while a flower is born,
And while one wrong cries for redress and finds
A soul to answer, still the world is young!

GWEN.

PROLOGUE.

Not of old time alone
Was Life a scene of hopes and fears,
High joys and bitter tears;
Nor Chance nor Fate are done;
Nor from our fuller Day
The fabled gods have wholly fled away;
The World and Man to-day are young
As when blind Homer sung.

What if the old forms change?
They were but forms, the things remain.
What if our fear and pain
Show not like monsters strange?

The self-same path of life
We tread, who fare beneath the sun
to-day;
We sink or triumph in the strife
No otherwise than they.

Compact of good and ill
Their life of old was, as is ours;
The same mysterious Will
Controlled their finite powers
And to strange thoughts of Fate
And workings of a fixed Necessity
Which rules both small and great.
As they bowed, so bow we.

And Love, the Lord and King—
Not Eros, but diviner far—
Still upon heavenward wing
Mounts like a shining star.
Than clouds and thunders stronger,
He brings a clear ray from the invisible
Sun;
And when he shines no longer,
Life's play is done.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—HENRY.

The sweet cold air of these untrodden
hills
Breathes gently. From the bustle of
the inn
I turn refreshed to this free mountain-
side,
And listen to the innumerable sound
Of the loud brook beneath, which roars
and spumes
Brown-white against the granite. These
thick firs
Shed balm upon the evening air; there
comes
No footstep but the rabbit's or the
shrew's
Upon this grassy path, which winds
and winds
Around the hill-side, under promon-
tories
Of gold and purple, to the grey old
church,
Where, chancing yesterday at eve, I
caught
The sound of hymns, richer and fuller
far
Than those of yore; and, hidden within
the porch,
Heard the prayers rising in a tongue
unknown,
But musical as Greek; and not un-
moved
Watched the loud preacher, firing with
his theme,
Grow rhythmic, and the answering
moans which showed
He touched the peasant heart.
Ah, it was long
Since I had heard men pray. I have
seen the cloud
Of incense rolling to the fretted roofs
Of dim cathedrals in the fair old lands
Where Faith weds not with Reason; I
have heard
The Benediction service, pure and
sweet,
Lit by young voices; I have watched
with fear
In college aisles the polished, delicate
priest
Poise his smooth periods on the razor
edge
Of a too fine-drawn logic; I have stood
And listened all unmoved, or all
ashamed
That I was moved a little, by the
trick

And artifice of speech which, though I knew it,
Could cheat the heart a moment, while the preacher
Enchained his ignorant thousands. None of these
Moved me as that unknown tongue yesterday.
I thought my faith reviving. Tush! what folly!
That died long years ago from the roots, dried up
By the strong glare of knowledge, nor could aught
Of all the miracles the Churchmen feign
E'er water it to life. That died long since,
Struck dead by German learning and the strong
And arrogant Priests of Science. Yet God knows—
If God there be—I would give my life to know
The strong Belief of old, when little hands
Were folded morn and eve, and little eyes
Scarce open from the night, or half weighed down
By the long hours of play, were raised to see
Heaven in a mother's gaze.
I would my soul
Might cast from it the dead unlovely load
Of dead men's speculations, rottennesses
Born of unloving lives which took the cell
And cloister for the home, the midnight lamp
For the glow of the hearth, and palsied limbs of doubt
For the strong sire's firm stride. I am young still;
Yet often, when the flash of racing oars,
The shouts, the rushing feet, the joyous din,
Floated along the avenues at eve
To my still college chamber; there would come
A weariness, a surfeit, a distaste
Of all the painted show which men call life,
Of all the sensual flush which men call love,
Of all the hollow, vain logomachies
Men take for learning, and I seemed to live
In premature decay, and to have touched
The fruit of life with eager lips and found it
Crumble away in dust. And yet I know
How little 'tis my few laborious years
Have given me of learning that might take
The utmost space of our allotted years,
Yet leave us still unquenched. And yet what bar—
But seven little years—comes there that parts
Me and my boyhood? Seven fleeting years!
And still I am a youth in frame, in mind,
In innocence of harm in thought or deed,
In scorn of wrong, and of the sensual stye
Wherein the boor lies bound. Only some power
There is which holds me fast and binds my will;
Only some dim and paralyzing force
Freezes the springs of action, till I lie

Moored in some tideless and forgotten creek,
A ship which lies and rots; while on high seas
The salt winds blow, the white crests break, the sail,
Filled with the stress of hope and youth and act,
Speeds to the unseen harbour.
What shall cure
This sickness of the soul? I would that I
Were like that peasant lad whom yestereve
I saw—a stalwart boy, on whose red cheek
The down of manhood showed; whose strong arm wound
Around his sweetheart's waist, as free from shame,
While down the village street they loitered slow
As 'twere the end of life to grow and breed
And die, as do his herds. Yet here again
I hesitate to act, because I know
What love is in its cause, what in its end,
And by what secret, miry paths full oft
The winged god steals, when all his violet plumes
Are smirched with foulness, and his fair eyes droop,
Cloyed with the grosser sweets of lower earth,
And the keen arrow flies not through the skies,
But drops a blunted shaft.
I would I knew
Less, or grew wiser, knowing. Golden hair,
Sweet eyes, the lithe young form, the girlish voice
Which issues forth so soft from the red lips
Arched like the bow of Cupid, the soft neck
Like a white pillar; these were charms enow
I warrant, which might draw as by a spell
The rustic youth around. Yes, she was fair
And sweet to see, and better, from her eyes
A pure young soul looked forth, which was well housed
Within so pure a body.—"Gwen" he called her—
'Tis a fair name—when by the vicarage gate
Her father stayed a moment courteously
To greet the stranger, and her shy glance turned
And met my tell-tale eyes. Surely a man
Who had seen the hollowness of things might here
Dwell not unhappy—purple hills around,
And great tranquillity—a wife's sweet smile
Beside him; little hands to draw him back
To the kindly earth; and all the healthy load
Of daily liturgies which make a heaven
Of earth, and doubt a madness.
Tush! what folly
Is this? Have I not passed these things and spurned
The weakness from me—I, who have given years
Of youth to learning, and am tired a while
Of my mistress, nothing more?

And yet, what hope
Was it that brought me hither, this last night
I spend among the mountains? Was it to watch
The sunset glories smite the golden sea,
Or hear the fairy rivulet fall in foam
Among the pines? Or was it that I thought
Perchance a slender form might pass this way,
Crowned with the crown of youth, and a sweet voice
Answer my eager greeting? Oh, what fools
And hypocrites are we, when a strong Power
Within us, unsuspected, binds us fast
And guides our footsteps! It was not the face
Of outward nature, but the secret spring
Which sets our Being to a hidden end,
And bears the name of Love.
A gleam of blue,
A hat white-plumed—there is no other form
As graceful; it is she! I may not love,
Who cannot wed. I shall not see her more.
I am young still; I will but look a moment
In those young eyes, and hear that sweet young voice
Refine our common English, and to-morrow
She will forget the stranger who was kind,
And I the mountain-nymph who was so fair.

SCENE II.

I know not why my books,
The learning that I loved, the charm of art
Should for a young girl's looks
Fade from my thought and vanish and depart.
It was but yesterday
I loved to pore upon the classic page
From morn to eve, nor could the damsels gay,
Who from the parching town
Flock to these pure cool heights, move me at all.
'Twas rest enough to roam
On the hill-side contented all day long,
And watch the shadows come
O'er moor and hill and purple wastes of sea;
To see the evening fall
On breathless hill and dale, till suddenly
The pale moon rose; then wander homeward slow
To my loved books with cheek with health aglow.
And now nor hill, nor dale nor sea,
Nor the old task sufficeth me.

For two days since, ere night could fall,
There came a young girl eighteen summers old—
A simple girl, half peasant, lithe and tall,
With deep-blue eyes and hair of gold;
And straightway my philosophy,
My learning, all forsaking me,
Left me a love-sick boy—no more—
Me who have drunk so deep of wiser lore!

Too wise, I thought, to rest content
With any childish blandishment;
Too wise! ah fool! for looking in such eyes,
'Twere folly to be wise.

For as she tripped round the hill
To visit some cottage lowly,
With her basket of food on her arm,
She showed like Artemis holy;
And I doffed to her, and she knew
The stranger of yesternight,
And her soft eyes showed more blue
As the rose on her cheek grew bright;
And, some power impelling me, I—
I who was always counted so shy—
I walked by her side a little, though I know
That my tongue was tied and my brain was slow;
But however it was, yet her eyes were blue,
And her roses all aglow.

And I walked by her side till she came
To the cottage door, where we parted,
And a mingling of pride and of shame
Rose and left me awhile half-hearted.
I to stoop to a simple girl,
The child of a peasant sire!
Though the gown of the clergyman hides many faults,
Surely 'twas mine to aspire.
What would they say—my friends,
The pale students, polished and proud,
If I, the first of them, stooped to take
A wife from the vulgar crowd?
Or she, my dear mother, whose pride
Lies hid so deep in the depths of her heart,
There is scarcely one of us knows it is there?
Or my father, the Earl, to whom life is no more
Than a long procession of hound and horse,
To whom hardly dishonour itself seems worse
Than to wed out of one's degree?

And I wandered out over the hill
For an hour of doubt or more,
And then, so it happened, my feet drew near
To that humble cottage door;
And I saw her come forth with a child on her arm,
Pale-faced and hollow-eyed,
And she seemed a pagan goddess no more,
But a fair Madonna, with all the charm
Of San Sisto or of the Chair.

And then, as over the hill
We walked back again, though her voice was still,
Surely was never a man so full
Of chattering talk as I.
But she was not angry at all, not she;
But from that calm vantage of wise eighteen
And with only a modest word or so,
And a sweet voice, and musical accent low,
She would bend her delicate ear to me,
And listen, as grave and as calm as a queen,
To the talk which meant little enough, maybe,
But was understood, I ween.

But however it was, I know
When we came to the gate, and her little hand

Slid shyly out, as she wished me good-bye,
That as I turned to go
My feet seemed winged on the slope of the hills,
And I hardly knew that the cold half-sleet
Which blots the clouded mountain and chills
The unsheltered wayfarer, wrapping me round,
Had drenched me. For up the silent street
Of the darkling village, jubilant sound
Compassed me; sunlight beamed on me still;
And even to my high inn-chamber I seemed
To be treading that breezy hill.

What is the charm that wakes
The bud, the flower, the fruit, from the cold ground?
What is the power that makes
With song the groves, with song the fields, resound?
One spell there is, so strong to move;
Some call it Spring, and others Love.

I thought my heart lay dead—
Sad heart, long buried deep in dusty lore!—
But now, the winter fled,
It beats with quicker beat than e'er before.—
A simple girl, yet can she move
Spring in my soul, the Spring of Love!

Strange fable that they taught
Of old, of souls divided as in twain,
Each by the other sought
Until the sundered reunite again,
And then the severed members move,
Knit by the magic spell of Love!

Ah, let us be at one,
Dear soul, if one we be, and are of kin
Before the world begun;
Sure 'tis that I was made thy soul to win.
Ah, child, if we might upward move,
Borne on the golden wings of Love!

SCENE III.

What is it the village leech
Tells me of fever and chill,
And bids me keep warm? Well, perhaps it were wise;
For I fail to sleep, and my limbs are as lead,
And a throb of painfulness splits my head,
And they warned me of this, I remember, again and again.
But surely I know that, came wind or rain,
If only my weary limbs could reach
To that little gate on the breezy hill
And I saw the desire of my eyes,
I should take little thought of myself, not I,
Not even were I doomed to die.

SCENE IV.

What is this? And where am I?
This is not the high inn-chamber, I know,
This white little room where the sunset-glow
On the white bed-curtains, as I lie,

Makes orange shadows which fade and fleet;
Nor are these my first nurse's reluctant feet
Which steal so lightly and daintily round,
As if grudging the faintest ghost of a sound;
Nor was the soft voice I heard
Last night, when the curtain was silently stirred,
The village doctor's at all:
I have heard it before, but when, I cannot recall.

For there comes a sense on my brain
Of time that is gone but has left no trace
But days which passed and left nothing behind,
Yet upon the secret depths of the mind
Are graven that nought may erase.
As the patient metal retains the sound
Of the living voice that is dead,
Even so doth my being retain
A long procession of days and nights,
Weary and suffering and heavily sped;
And then for a moment the cool air strikes,
As some one carries me tenderly down,
And slowly the wheels of my litter climb,
Leaving the streets of the little town,
Up the hill through the scented pines.

And then all is blank for a time;
A long time, surely, when nothing came
But wandering dreams and a whispered name,
Repeated often and like a charm,
To keep off fancied phantoms of harm.
"Gwen," was it? Somewhere I seem to recall,
Far away in some world of forgotten things,
A fair young face which I loved to see;
And one night in this room it smiled on me,
And the ghastly shapes spread their horrible wings
And left me at rest for a while.

Ah, no! I did not dream it at all,
For now for a week she comes every day,
A young nurse, virginal, white, and tall,
And her father, the vicar, whose kind eyes beam
With a genial kindness he cannot speak;
For if ever he ventures a word, it is gall
To one who is peevish and weak,
And his words struggle out like stones in a stream,
Jerked together, and jostled, and battered away,
Till I long that he had done.

But she, my Artemis pure and fair,
My Madonna, who stood at the cottage gate—
She is perfect, I hold, from the crown of her hair
To the dainty sole of her delicate foot;
And her hand and her voice are as soft as silk,
And she comes hour by hour with a tender care,
With my draught or my food, or with rich cool milk.
Ah! if only—— What, am I then worse than the brute,

That I stoop to thoughts that I loathe and hate—
I, a great peer's only son?

For I see on the walls of my simple room,
Which I know was her own, the work of her hand,
At night, in the firelight's flickering gloom,
This text emblazoned in letters of gold—
"For whom Christ dièd." Ah, if indeed
His words were the words of a real doom,
And his faith the faith of a living creed!
But now souls and beliefs are bargained and sold,
There is no belief by which men may stand,
There is neither creed nor God!

But whether there be or be not indeed,
It shall not change me or move my mind.
Shall I who hate to see weak things bleed,
From the hare which shrieks, to the trout on the hook,
Play false with the simple heart of a maid,
Till her poor soul pines with a terrible need?
I dare not do it; I am afraid
To see the young soul, with a hopeless look,
Go out for the truth which it cannot find
By dark ways, of truth untrod.

She shall keep unassailed her young innocent heart,
For aught to be whispered by me or done;
She shall hold her faith; but 'tis best we part,
For hearts break daily and white lives fade,
And 'twere better indeed I had never been born,
Than to bring a young life to sorrow and woe,
And leave a pure saint to the cold world's scorn,
Shrinking back from the wreck which myself had made.
No, of all the wrong-doing beneath the sun,
Not this one be mine, oh God!

White room! white curtain! little bed
That once was hers, whereon she lay
So warm and still, her sunny head
Safe pillowed till the growing day!

I bless you and I love you all.
I feel so young who once seemed old.
I see a lithe girl-figure, tall,
With grave blue eyes and hair of gold,

Stand by the half-closed door when he,
The village doctor, yesternight,
Came stealthily and looked on me,
With noiseless step and shaded light;

And I, who deep in lethargy
Seemed buried, to a careless eye,
Lay all unmoved, till suddenly
I caught the echo of a sigh,

And, looking up, beheld my dear,
The first love of my weary heart,
Stand pitiful, and marked the tear
In the soft eye unbidden start.

Yet no prognostics dire they were
He launched against me; only these:
Torpor and weakness, needing care
And watchfulness for remedies;

And, seeing that I saw and heard,
Turned to me with a cheerful face,
And spoke some random hopeful word,
And nodded smiling to the place,

Where stood the stair. But I, I knew
A sudden rush of hope and strength,
And cared not when, if but at length,
My new-born thought should turn out true.

SCENE V.

Oh, joy! I grow stronger day by day;
And day by day in the sweet summer weather
I wander over the hills, and away
High up 'mid the purple masses of heather,
Till mounting aloft with no one by,
All in the bountiful summer weather,
I drink in new life from every pore,
Throbbing and bourgeoning more and more
In every limb and with every breath,
As, laid on the heather, I watch the sky
And the purple shadows on sea and hill,
And hear no sound but the bee's deep hum,
And watch the shy mountain-sheep timidly come,
And the kestrel circling, aloft on the rocky brow,
Fulfilling the marvellous mission of Death and of Pain.
Death! ah, but that is far from me now,
Vanished with Pain and its legions of Ill.
I can walk with my limbs, I can leap, I can run;
I rejoice in my strength: the day of weakness is done.
I live, I grow strong; I am one with the World and with Life again.

And sometimes, rare blessing, there comes with me
A fair young Mountain-nymph over the hill,
Fearless and free from a thought of ill.
For her mother, who came of gentler blood,
Who was always delicate, kind, and good—
Her mother died long ago, and she
Has lived from her childhood fearless and free.
I think no touch of passion as yet
Has moved her. Only pity made wet
Her eyes on that night which awoke my love.
I am only a friend more mature and wise
Than any she knows, and a shamed surprise
Would wake in the sapphire depths of her eyes,
If she saw what blind and passionate longings move
Within the hidden thoughts of a man.

Ah, well! but nature is twofold, and sure
It were not wise to ban
The instincts which are neither gross nor pure.
Let him suppress them who can.
It is only in thought I invade her virginal peace,
For I know that this sweet rehearsal of love must cease,
For I am not my own; but my wife to be,
Stately and beautiful, waits for me
With that which suffices to build up our shattered wealth.
Ay, but what if love, awaking and coming by stealth,
Should bind me in chains on this wild Welsh hill?
Or hurry me downward, downward, to fathomless ill?
Tush! how should I be a devil if there be not a God?
I am only a young man in whom the young blood
Pulses quickly, and have I no gratitude
For the life which she saved, the life which is grown so sweet,
As we roam o'er these breeze-swept uplands with rapid young feet?
Oh, joy! I am one with the life of the hills, and the skies, and of man!

SCENE VI.

It is done! I have told her I love her,
Yester-eve as we walked together,
Some power grown tyrannous holding me fast,
Blotting alike the Future and Past;
And for answer she gave but a sigh and a start,
And a blush as bright as the purple heather,
And a little flutter of bosom and heart,
And a glow like the hues of the sunset above her.
Oh, fair ash-grove where I told my love!
Fair ash-grove dear to Cymric verse
Since their bard who sang thee when Chaucer was young!
Fairest of groves that were ever sung!
Oh, fairest sunset of all that have shone
Since man first woke in Paradise garden,
Before the temptation, the ruin, the curse,
Before the strange story was over and done,
And man an outcast hopeless of pardon!
As we sat on the mossy bank, she and I,
And no creature was near with intrusive eye,
To mark our innocent joy!
Sweet day when love awakens and stands,
With his free limbs bare and his outstretched hands,
Before two young shame-fast natures which yearn
With innocent yearning: clear fires that burn
Free from all baser alloy.
It is done; it is over; and never Eve,
The mother of maidens who love and grieve,
Looked fairer than did Gwen,
This peasant maiden, when first she heard
The one ineffable, passionate word
Which stirs for ever the hearts of maidens and of men.

The bud on the bough,
The song of the bird,
The blue river-reaches
By soft breezes stirred;
Oh, soul, and hast thou found again
thy treasure?
Oh, world, and art thou once more filled
with pleasure?
Oh, world, hast thou passed
Thy sad winter again?
Oh, soul, hast thou cast
Thy dull vesture of pain?
Oh! winter, sad wert thou and full of
sorrow;
Oh soul, oh world, the summer comes
to-morrow!

Oh, soul! 'tis love quickens
Time's languorous feet;
Oh, world! 'tis Spring wakens
Thy fair blossoms sweet;
Fair world, fair soul, that lie so close
together,
Each with sad wintry days and fair
Spring weather!

As on the clear hill-sides we walked
together,
A gleam of purple passed over the sea,
And, glad with the joy of the summer
weather,
My love turned quickly and looked on
me.
Ah, the glad summer weather, the fair
summer weather!
Ah, the purple shadow on hill and sea!

And I looked in her eyes as we walked
together,
And knew the shy secret she fain would
hide,
And we went hand in hand through the
blossoming heather,
She who now was my sweetheart, and
I by her side;
For the shade was the shadow of Love's
wing-feather,
Which bares, as he rises, the secrets we
hide.

Now, come cloud or sunshine, come
joy or weeping,
It can be no longer as 'twas before.
Just a shadow of change o'er the soul
comes creeping,
And farewell to the joyance and freedom
of yore;
For it crosses Love's face, where he
lies a-sleeping,
And he soars awaking, nor slumbers
more.

I have found her!
At last, after long wanderings, dull
delays,
I have found her;
And all my life is tuned to joy and
praise.
I have found her!

A myriad-myriad times
In man's long history this thing has
been;
All ages, climes,
This daily, hourly miracle have seen
A myriad-myriad times;

Yet is it new to-day.
I have found her, and a new Spring
glads my eyes.
World, fair and gay

As when Eve woke in dewy Paradise,
Fade not away!

Fade not, oh light,
Lighting the eyes of yet another pair,
But let my sight
Find her as I have found her, pure and fair!
Shine, mystic light!

Yes, it is sweet to be
Awaited, and to know another heart
Beats faster for our coming, and to see
The blush unbidden start
To the fair cheek, and mark young Love's alarms
Perturb and make more fair the girlish charms.

I am once more
A young man with the passions of my kind;
I am no pedant, glorying as before
In barren realms of mind.
The springtide that awakens land and sea,
The Spring of Youth and Love, awakens me.

It calls, and all my life
Answers from its dim depths, "I come, I hear."
It breaks, it bursts, in sudden hope and strife,
And precious chills of fear.
It comes with tremulous, furtive thrills which can
Strip from me all the Past, and leave me, man.

SCENE VII.—GWEN.

Dear hills, dear vales, so calm and bright
In dewy dawn, in silvery night!
Dear woods and uplands cool and wild,
Where yesterday I walked a child,
I love you, but I roam no more
With all the careless joy of yore.
My girlish days are past and done;
I know my womanhood begun.

What was it one so wise could see
In an untutored child like me?
What was it? Nay, 'twere sin to prove
By earthy tests the ways of love.
Whate'er it was, Love's perfect way
Is without doubting to obey.

I do obey. I lay my soul
Low at Love's feet for his control.
Farewell, oh paths half hidden in flowers,
Trodden by young feet in childish hours;
White bed, white room, and girlish home!
The hour of Love and Life is come!

I shall not watch as yesterday
The orange sunset fade to gray,
Nor roam unfettered as the bee,
A maiden heart and fancy free.
I am bound by such a precious chain
I may not wander forth again.

Oh, bond divine! oh, sweet, sweet chain!
Oh, mingling of ecstatic pain!
I am a simple girl no more.
I would not have it as before.

One day of love, one brief, sweet day,
And all my past is swept away.

Oh, vermeil rose and sweet,
Rose with the golden heart of hidden fire,
Bear thou my yearning soul to him I love,
Bear thou my longing and desire.

Glide safe, oh sweet, sweet rose,
By fairy-fall and cliff and mimic strand,
To where he muses by the sleeping stream,
Then eddy to his hand.

Drown not, oh vermeil rose,
But from thy dewy petals let a tear
Fall soft for joy when thou shalt know the touch
And presence of my dear.

Tell him, oh sweet, sweet rose,
That I grow fixed no more, nor flourish now
In the sweet maiden garden-ground of old,
But severed even as thou.

Say from thy golden heart,
From virgin folded leaf and odorous breath,
That I am his to wear or cast away,
His own in life or death.

Thy shadow, oh tardy night,
Creeps onward by valley and hill,
And scarce to my straining sight
Show the white road-reaches still.

Oh, night, stay now a little, little space,
And let me see the light of my beloved's face!

My love is late, oh night,
And what has kept him away?
For I know that he takes not delight
In the garish joys of day.
Haste, night, dear night, and bring my love to me!
What if his footsteps halt and tarry but for thee?

Nay, what if his footsteps slide
By the swaying bridge of pine,
And whirled seaward by the tide
Is the loved form I counted mine!
Oh, night, dear night that comest yet dost not come,
How shall I wait the hour that brings my darling home?

Fair star that on the shoulder of yon hill
Peepest, a little eye of tranquil night,
Come forth. Nor sun nor moon there is to kill
Thy ray with broader light.
Shine, star of eve that art so bright and clear;
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here!

My lover! oh, fair word for maid to hear!
My lover who was yesterday my friend!
Oh, strange we did not know before how near
Our stream of life smoothed to its fated end!

Shine, star of eve, as Love's self, bright and clear;
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here!

He comes! I hear the echo of his feet.
He comes! I fear to stay, I cannot go.
Oh, Love, that thou art shame-fast, bitter-sweet,
Mixed with all pain, and conversant with woe!
Shine, star of eve, more bright as night draws near;
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here!

What shall I do for my love,
Who is so tender
And dear and true,
Loving and true and tender,
My strength and my defender—
What shall I do?

I will cleave unto my love,
Who am too lowly
For him to take.
With a self-surrender holy
I will cleave unto him solely;
I will give my being wholly
For his dear sake.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—HENRY.

Only a little week
Of meetings under the star,
Since the blissful evening I dared to speak,
Sweet evening that seems so far!
And already the cruel post brings me word
That my mother the countess, who, far away
At a German bath with her ailing lord,
Has been dreaming the early autumn away,
Returns to-day, and to-morrow will come
To take the invalid leisurely home.

Ah, mother! I fear that your pride will scorn
That your son should mate with a lowly bride,
Though a vicar's daughter is well enough born
For all but a foolish pride.
And I know, moreover, your heart is set
On her to whom no word is spoken yet,
The lofty heiress who comes to restore
Our house to the splendours of yore.
Poor mother, your patience was sadly tried
By the studious fancies which kept me apart
From the London which now seems to hold your heart;
And, alas! I hardly know how to face
The blank amaze of your haughty gaze,
The cold surprise of patrician eyes,
As you listen to my disgrace.

Disgrace, did I say? Ah! where
In all the bewildering town
Is any as Gwen is, fair
Or comely, or high or pure?
Or when did a countess's coronet crown
A head with a brighter glory of hair?
Or how could titular rank insure
A mind and a heart so sweet?
They shall not shame me to cheat or beguile
My darling, my queen, my treasure,

Nor blot from my soul the pure pleasure
Of the brief hours that have been.
And if indeed I must go for a while,
It shall not be for long, but a little while;
And then I will haste back again with passionate feet,
To bask again in her smile.
I must tell her all to-night, sweet to-night, when we meet.

SCENE II.

I have seen her once again,
I have seen her again, my dear.
And oh, but parting was a bitter pain!
And oh, the ready, child-like tear!
I did not know, even I, before,
With how immense and ponderous a chain
Love binds the girlish heart, and holds it evermore.

For I hardly know at all
How it came to be, but as we two spoke
Of parting and absence her sweet voice broke,
And she paled and wavered as if to fall;
And 'twas only a ready encircling arm,
And lip to lip in a close embrace,
That brought back the rose to her troubled face,
And recalled the wandering life from its swift alarm.
Dear young soul that Fate has given me to hold,
And shall I forsake thee, come weal or woe?
No, I will not betray thy sweet trustfulness; no,
Not for millions of gems and gold.

But before I left her and went
My way to the inn, while the village street
Echoed loud with the rhythmical wheels and feet
Of my mother's chariot, we vowed together
That, through every change of life's fickle weather,
We would cling to each other and never part.
And so I, the round of festivities done,
And the pheasants killed and the county won,
Will steal from my gilded trammels, and come
To the Welsh hillside which is now my home,
And the child who has my heart.

Was ever a girlish heart so fair
As Gwen's, or free from earth?
She is pure and innocent, I swear,
As an infant at the birth.
She is full, indeed, of much old-world lore,
From the lessons her mother taught her of yore;
Mozart's sweet melodies loves to rehearse,
And many a tome of forgotten verse;
And something of modern letters she knows,
And oft in fancy with Elaine goes,
As she floats down lifeless to Camelot.
But of wrong and evil she knows no jot.
She dreams no more of the ways of men,
Their deceits, their treacheries,

Or of coarse, bold women,—my little Gwen,
With the clear, deep, trusting eyes—
Than if you should come by some Arctic main,
Where a world of ice shuts humanity out;
On some simple forgotten colony,
Which had never heard of the world or wealth;
Or a convent set on a scarpèd hill.
Tush! but they would corrupt each other, no doubt,
Or some echo of evil would creep in by stealth.
But for Gwen the pure cold stream of her will
Flows along the mountain-side, taking no stain,
Crystal-clear, reflecting its kindred sky.
Was ever a soul so fair?

Forget me not, dear soul! Yet wherefore speak
The words of freedom, where the thing is not?
Forget me not! And yet how poor and weak
My prayer, who know that nothing is forgot!
Low voice, or kindling eye, or glowing cheek,
Forget them not!

Forget me only if forgetting prove
Oblivion of low aims and earthy thought;
Forget the blinder appetites which move
Through secret ways, by lower nature taught;
Forget them, love!

Remember only, with fond memory,
The exaltation, the awakened soul,
Swift moments strong to bind my heart to thee,
Strong tides of passionate faith which scorn control—
In these remember me!

Dear child so sweet in maidenhood,
How should I doubt, regarding thee,
A secret spring of hidden Good,
Which rules all things and bids them be?

Dear soul, so guileless and so pure,
So innocent and free from stain,
As 'twere untempted Eve again,
I lean upon thee and grow sure.

I love no more the barren quest,
The doubt I cherished I despise;
I am a little while at rest,
Seeing the Godhead in thine eyes.

Can good be, yet no Giver? Can
The stream flow on, yet own no source?
From what deep well of hidden Force
Flows the diviner stream in man?

I know not. Some there is, 'tis clear,
A mystery of mysteries.
Thy youth has gazed upon it, dear,
And bears its image in thine eyes.

Yes, God there is. Too far to know,
It may be, yet directing all.

It is enough; we spring, we grow,
We ripen, we decay, we fall,

To a great Will. No empty show
Of aimless and unmeaning ends
Our life is, but the overflow
Of a great Spring which always tends

To a great Deep. The silver thread
Between the Fountain and the Sea
We are for ever, quick or dead,
And Source and Ending both are He.

It is enough—no more I know;
But maybe from thy faithful eyes,
Thy trust that knows no chill, thy glow
Of meek and daily sacrifice,

I may relearn the legend fair
I whispered at my mother's knee,
And seeing Godhead everywhere,
Confess, "And this man too was He."

SCENE III.—GWEN.

Oh, happy days so lately done,
And yet removed so far away
Before our passion-tide begun
And life's young May!
Shy early days of sun and showers,
When all the paths were hidden in flowers
Tender and sweet,
And on the mountain-side the year,
With girlish change of smile and tear,
Tripped with light feet;
And by the melting snows the violet came,
And on the wolds the crocus like a saffron flame!

Daily some song of lonely bird,
By tufted field or tasselled grove,
From the clear dawn to solemn eve was heard,
But few of love.
Nay, rather virginal flutings pure and clear,
Passionless preludes, ah, how dear!
Nor yet upon the nest,
The bright-eyed fearless mother sate,
Nor yet high in mid-heaven her soaring mate
Thrilled his full breast,
Nor yet within the white domain of song
Love burst with eyes aglow the maiden choir among.

But when the fuller summer shone,
Soon as the perfumed rose had come,
Lo, all the reign of song was done,
The birds all dumb;
And for the choir which did before rejoice,
Low, tuneless accents of an anxious voice
Weighed down with care,
And dim forebodings choking the high note
Which once resounded from the joyous throat
So full and fair.
I would not lose the love which is so dear,
But 'tis oh the parted days of the imperfect year!

Oh, soft dove gently cooing
To thy mate upon her nest,
And hast thou known undoing
And deep unrest?

Hath any pain of wooing
Pierced thy soft breast?

Oh, pale flower ever turning
To thy great lord the Sun,
And dost thou know a yearning
Which is never done,
For cloudless days returning
And June begun?

Ah, heart! there is no pleasure
As thine, nor grief.
Time Future holds the treasure;
Time Past, the thief.
What power brings this one, measure,
Or that, relief?

Ah! 'tis not very long
Since I was light and free,
And of all the burden of pain and wrong
No echo reached to me;
But day by day, upon this breeze-swept hill,
Far from the too great load of human ill,
I lived within the sober walls of home,
Safe-set, nor heard a sound of outward evil come.

It is not that I know,
By word or any deed,
What depths of misery lie below,
What hearts that bleed;
But, since I have felt the music of my soul
Touched by another's mastering hand,
I seem to hear unfathomed oceans roll,
As when a child I saw the Atlantic lash the strand.

Oh, mother, who art dead
So long beneath the grass,
Lift up once more, lift thy beloved head
When we two pass,
And tell me—tell me if this passionate pain,
This longing, this ineffable desire
For one I know so lately, be the gain
To which young maids aspire.
Is this to love, to kiss my chain and feel
A dominant will to which 'tis joy to kneel?

Oh, mother, I am a maid;
I am young, I know not men.
My great joy makes me shrink and be afraid.
It is not now as then
When first we walked together on the hill.
I take no longer, thought for any soul
Of those I loved before and cherish still;
I care not for the poor, the blind, the lame;
I care not for the organ's solemn roll,
Or sabbath hymns and prayers, who am burnt as of a flame.

Nay, love! how can I doubt thee
Who art so dear,
Though I pine away without thee
In the fading year?
The ash flings down its leaf, the heather
Is bloomless in the autumn weather;
The mountain paths are wet with rime,
Where we together eve by eve
Would wander in the joyous time,

Fair hours when thy returning strength
Came with the days' increasing length.
I pace alone the dear familiar road
Where first we met. I walk alone;
I have no aim nor purpose, none—
Only to think of those soft days and
still believe.

Last evening, on a distant hill,
A wreath of cloud-mist dealing sleet
Compassed my homeward steps, as still
I toiled with weary feet.
Oh, what if the snow, like a winding-
sheet,
Had stayed the steps of my life and my
troubled will,
And closed on me for ever, concluding
there
My little hopes and joys, and maybe
my despair!

Nay, I will not doubt him nor be
afraid;
He is all that is good, I know it, tender
and true.
But I fear he is higher in rank than he
said;
For one day, I remember it well, as he
lay
Very weak on his bed, a letter came
Coronet-blazoned, and half in shame
I lifted my eyes, and he saw I knew,
And his face grew troubled and never
more
Was his gaze as frank as it was before.
Tender it was, indeed, and ardent and
true,
But not as frank as before.

But I count the days till he comes
again;
I long for him with a dull, deep pain.
I will do whatever thing my love
commands;
I will go or stay; I am taken as a bird
in his hands.
Oh, love, my love! tarry not long;
I am not happy nor strong.

Delay not, love; the sun has lost his
fire.
Stay not; the cold earth loses warmth
and light.
Summer is dead, and Winter comes to
blight
The waiting world's desire.

Come back, and coming bring back
Spring with thee,
Spring for my heart though all the
world lie dead;
My life will burst in blossom at thy
tread—
Oh, love, come back to me!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—HENRY.

Once more upon these dear familiar
hills
I tread; 'tis autumn now, 'twas summer
then.
The valley paths are deep in mire; the
leaf
Falls sadly from the bough; the village
inn,
So noisy then, when four months since
I lay
'Twixt life and death, is silent; a gray
mist
Hangs o'er the breathless lowland. All
the hills

Are clouded, on whose summits a thin cowl
Of snowflakes sits at times. Summer is dead;
A sad autumnal stillness over all
The dull world broods, and in my heart I know
Summer is dead—sweet summer, ah, too brief!

For now, alas! I know
What folly 'twas that kept me here
Three little months ago.
I have drunk deep since then of cups that cheer,
The sea of eyes, the beat of popular hands,
When to his thought the high-set platform reels,
As now the solitary speaker stands
Poised like a swimmer on high waves, who feels
The world cut off from him and knows
To fail is ruin. I have known
Men better since, and felt how near
And yet far off are clown and peer;
And known how better than all lore,
Better than love itself, and more,
How satisfying and how great,
It is to aid the ship of state,
The labouring bark, which reeling goes
'Mid sunken rocks, and watching foes.
And best of all I know
How baseless was my sweet Arcadian dream.
I could not bear—I know it well—
To live retired from the central stream
Of life, as if in a hermit's cell.
I long for the hurry, the passion, the glow
Of full life lived in the eyes of men;
I can bear no longer to dream in inglorious ease.
A great name, the voice of the people, authority, these
Are more than my simple Gwen.

Ay, and I have learnt besides,
What I scarce suspected before,
By what poor expedients my father has striven
To keep the wolf from his door—
Bubble schemes, mine-ventures which came to nought,
And some senseless bet on some swindling race,
And I know not what gambling follies beside.
But I know that our lawyer, with long-drawn face,
Came to me with secret warnings of ill,
And hints that a prudent marriage alone could fill
The coffers so nearly empty, again.
Poor father! it was not right, for your dreams of gain,
And your pompous life and wasteful, orderless state,
To diminish a family hoard that was never great;
But I know that if the blow he hinted should come,
And the Jew and the broker harried our ancient home,
It would kill you and drive my mother distraught.
Nay, I could not bear to see it. My path is clear:
I must see you once more and leave you, my love, my dear.

SCENE II.

I did not know it, I swear;
I did not dream that a young girl, fair and free,
Could long care for one grave and studious and worn like me.
I thought our brief passion was dead;
I thought I had schooled my heart to obey my head;
But when I saw her, she showed so fair,—
It was just at the sĕlf-same spot where we used to meet,—
That I hastened up the steep path with wings to my feet;
And she did not see me at first, but stood for a while
Silent and musing and still, with a sweet half-smile,
As if bent on some mingled vision of joy and pain,
And I knew that our love was not dead, but slept and awoke again.

But when at length she turned her eyes,
With a beautiful, pitiful look of surprise,
And a questing glance, and a shiver and a start,
Oh, 'twas then that she touched my heart!
And before a moment passes again we stand,
With eyes on each other bent, and hand linked to hand;
And with hardly a spoken word, we are face to face,
Strained together again in a close embrace;
And I failed, I failed to tell her what should have been told,
For the heart of a maid is higher than rank or gold.

But to-night I must speak and tell her all,
I must tell her though the sky fall.

SCENE III.

It is over, it is done.
She from the clear frank depths of her maidenly pride:
"Dear, it is sudden indeed, but I thought it would come,
For I doubt if any are happy under the sun.
But you, you shall not imperil the pride of your home;
I know you a fitting mate for a loftier bride.
I will love you and pray for you always. And now good-bye.
Be good, my dear, to your wife. But I
Have awoke from my dream in time, and will tend
My poor, who, I fear, have missed a friend;
And my father is growing old, and will want me here.
Fear not, I shall not be unhappy. Farewell, my dear!"
And she went with feet as swift as the bounding roe,
And vanished before I knew she was minded to go,
And left me alone with the dying day in the fading year.

I cannot leave her thus; I must see her again,
Though I know it is cruel to both and renewal of pain.
But all night long have I lain awake,
Tossing and fevered for her dear sake,
As when she nursed me to life in her little room;
And once, when I dozed a moment, I seemed to hear
Her sweet voice calling aloud in accents of fear,
Calling my name in a voice which sank to a moan;
And, though I know it was dreaming fancy alone,
I cannot leave her thus. I am harassed with fears;
I must see her again; I must write. And lo! through the gloom
The slow dawn of autumn breaks in mist and in tears.

Dear, I must see you again.
Bring with you the last sweet rose
Which lingers still in your garden-ground,
The last red summer rose.

Do you mind how you sent me a rose
Along the swift streamlet's flow,
A sweet and a blushing rose?
It is faded—'twas long ago.

Come, dear. A dream visited me
In the weary vigilant night;
I heard your voice calling to me
In grievous pain and affright.

I must see you. The swift wheels stay
At the spot we have known of yore;
Be there, ere they bear me away
From my love for evermore.

SCENE IV.—GWEN.

The light has gone out of my life,
Yet I will not repine.
Nay, 'tis well to have passed betimes through the struggle and strife.

Shall I grieve that he comes not again,
That my love is not mine?
Ah, folly! the whole creation travails in pain.

I will live my own life once more;
I will succour the weak;
I will be but a little more grave than I was before.

I will strive to repay the deep love
My fond father fails to speak;
Though the path may be lonely and drear, yet the heavens are above.

Ah! my love who no longer art mine,
Yet my love till I die,
I will strive to be patient and strong, but I wither and pine.

A letter from my love,
In the well-remembered hand,
Once again, yet we have parted;
'Tis hard to understand.

A letter from my love!
Dear letter, and what says he?
"I am going away for ever.
Come once more, dear to me,

"And with you bring a rose."—
My love, I will be there;
I will bring you a red, red rosebud
Upon your heart to wear.

But you must not crush it, dear,
Or bind it to you too fast,
Or the poor flower's scent, I fear,
Will bring back to you the Past.

Wear your rose lightly, dear,
For ornament or pleasure;
But the virgin rose of a maiden's heart
Keep safe as a precious treasure.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—HENRY.

How weak are we and blind!
How ignorant of fate!
For I thought I was steadfast and firm, and knew my mind,
Till I saw her at the gate;
And next day, as soon as the train rolled on and I sat alone,
I wished that I had not written to give her pain,
And I prayed that she might not come, nor might I see her again.

But when the swift wheels slackened and grew still
At the little wayside station beyond the hill,
There alone by the platform stood my treasure, my dear,
Very pale, with a rose in her hand; full of maidenly fear.
And I sprang out to her, and we whispered ardent and low,
With sad hearts throbbing together and cheeks aglow,
For a precious minute or two, till the signal to go;
And then, all my youth and my love rising up like a flame,
I whispered, "I cannot leave you, my love, my bride.
Come to me, my own, my wife!"
And lo! as in a trance,
With a shiver and tottering limbs, and a pitiful glance,
As one who walked in a dream, she obeyed and came
Constrained, and sank fainting down in her place at my side.

There she lay long time on my breast, very pale and chill,
And I trembled to see her poor white face, my dear;
And the swift train had sped us on far, when, with something of fear,
She said quickly, "Where am I?"
And I: "With your husband to be.
We are long miles away from your home. You will trust me, my own?"
And she moaned, "Ah! how could I leave my father alone?
Poor father! Ah! what will they think of me when they know?
They will deem me unmaidenly—bold.
Let me go. We were mad;
It is nothing to women to wither and pine and be sad.
Let me go. It is better. Some weakness constrained me to come.
I will go and be happy, fear not, with my equals at home."
But I soothed her, and flashed a message that all was well,

And to promise a letter next day, telling
all that there was to tell;
And she lay like a child on my heart,
with her head bent wearily down,
And lo! on the autumn twilight, the
glare and the turmoil of town.

I hold him wrong who opens wide
The secret, sacred doors of love,
The paths by shame-fast footsteps tried,
The mazes of the enchanted grove.

I hold him wrong; but Gwen the wife
Is dearer far than Gwen the maid.
We walk by hidden deeps of life,
And no man maketh us afraid.

I hold him wrong; but who can prize
At its full worth the love he gains,
Till bound by mutual sacrifice,
Till fused by mutual joys and pains?

Too happy are the halcyon days;
For Time the taker, Time the thief,
Steals ghostlike down the flowery ways,
And makes the blessed moments brief.

I have left her ofttimes for a while,
And then, on some pretext hastily
found,
Have hurried back to bask in her
smile;
But now I am here fast bound,
For my father is failing, day by day,
And 'tis hard to keep the harpies at
bay,
Who would enter and drive him from
house and home.
They must not suspect that I, who am
alone
The mainstay on which they depend to
secure their own,
Am not the lover of one who brings
lands and wealth,
But bound to a penniless girl whom I
wedded by stealth;
They must not dream it; and therefore
here must I stay,
Though I seem indeed to lose every
day
That keeps me away from my love.
Dear soul, it is springtime again, and
fresh currents move
Through the world, and stir the life in
blossom and tree,
And the little hidden life which ere
long shall be.

SCENE II.—GWEN.

Dear love, I will be patient, yet
I long to see you, and I fear
Lest absence lead you to forget
The things that once were dear.

You tell me we awhile must hide
Our union safe from prying eyes,
But when your ailing father dies
You will proclaim me as your bride.

I long that this might be, nor wait
The death of any. I have been
These last six months, 'spite love and
fate,
Dearest, as happy as a queen.

But now another dearer life
Forbids my careless patience more.

Pray God it may not come before
I am acknowledged as your wife.

I did not know,
When I walked careless on the hills,
The hopeless load of human ills;
But neither could I know
To what full height our happiness can grow.

Sing, caged bird, sing!
Is this your constant strain?
"I would, I would that I were free;
I would, I would, I would that I were once again
Sitting alone within a leafy tree;
I would that I might be
Breathing free air far from this gilded pain."

Ah, bird! I would be free
As you, for I weary here.
And yet, my bird, I have one so dear, so dear,
That, if he might only bide with me,
I should no longer care
To change this stifling, fettered air
For the free mountain-breathings fresh and fair.

Cold east and drear,
Thy chill breath veils the world in cheerless gray.
Sad east, while thou art here,
Life creeps with halting feet its weary way.
I feel you pierce my heart, oh, cold east wind!
Sad east! that leavest lifeless plains behind.
The dull earth, watching, sleeps
Within her leafless bowers,
Until the west wind coming weeps
Soft tears that turn to flowers.
Oh, cruel east! that dost delay the world,
Withering the leaf of hope while yet unfurled.

Over this gray cheerless town
The stifling smoke-mist hangs, a squalid pall,
And night, too swift for springtide, settles down
Before the shades of mountain-evenings fall.
I sicken here alone, dull day by day,
To watch the turmoil wake and fade away.

Why does my dear not come,
Or write or send some little loving word?
It is not here as 'twas at home.
I have no companion but this prisoned bird;
No friend in all the throng to hear my sighs;
No glance, but the cold stare of alien eyes.

No friend, nor love nor care
To hold me; but when summer suns return
And wake this stagnant and exhausted air,
The little dearer life for which I yearn
May wake, and make me happier than of old,
Watching the innocent life my arms enfold.

Cold east and drear,
Spreading a noontide darkness on the town.
You shall not blight my faith, nor make me fear,
Nor leave me in despond, nor drag me down.
I am alone; but, if he loves me still,
I am not all alone, sad days and chill.

SCENE III.

I grieve that my father stays away,
Though his letters are always dear and kind,
But sometimes I think they seem to convey
Some shadow of pain on a doubtful mind;
But he does not know that I am alone,
For I could not tell him my dear was gone,
And it may be he has not forgiven quite
Our foolish and hurried flight.
What? Do I not know—forgive, did I say?—
That nought which falls short of committed wrong
Would keep his heart from his child for long,
Nought that a kiss would not chase away?

Dear father! I would I might welcome him here!
For, brooding here day by day,
My mind grows full of a formless fear,
And I dread the glance of the women; the sneer
Which I seem to see on their lips and eyes,
As they ask sometimes with a hard surprise
If my husband is ailing; he keeps away—
And I have but faltering words to say.
And to-day I thought, as I sate in my lonely room,
With a little frock on my lap, in the gathering gloom,
And the woman came with the lights, that she seemed to look
With the old respect no more, but a cold rebuke.
Does she doubt, then, I am his wife? I will fly; I will go;
I will tell her all my secret. Ah, no! ah, no!
Great Heaven, does she think he is gone and will no more come?
Oh, Henry, 'tis cruel to leave me, come to me, come home!

SCENE IV.

This is the fourth dull week—
I am wretched and sick at heart—
Since the thought came first which I fear to write or speak,
And I have no rest at night; for I suddenly start,
Thinking I hear his voice calling to me in pain,
Mixed with voices of scorn sometimes, through the dead city-night;
And then, if my tired eyes sink to slumber again,
I wake in deadly fright.
And before the bustle of life revives in the street,
I watch for the hurrying sound of the messenger's feet,
And I hold my breath as he comes with a sickening fear.

But the sharp summons passes on
quickly, and never here
He stays; but I must not despair, nor
ever forget
That I live for a ripening life, which
'twould injure to fret.

But I know that my face is pale and
anxious and thin,
Which my love would hardly know, if
he saw me again;
And I look in the glass, and I start to
see therein
Two hollow eyes answer my gaze with
a look of pain.
And perhaps he would love me no
more in my beauty's disgrace;
Perhaps he was only a slave to a foolish
face;
Perhaps—— But I know I am sick in
body and mind,
Or I could not doubt my love, who was
always kind.

My heart is heavy,
My life runs low,
My young blood's pulses
Beat faint and slow.

I cannot believe,
Yet I dare not doubt,
For when faith is shadowed
Love's fire goes out.

Oh, Love, what is this
That thy strong power brings
To those thou hast touched
With thy vanishing wings?

Oh, Love, it was cruel
To bring us to pain.

I will hide me away
From the cold world again.

I can stay here no longer;
Whatever may come,
I will go to my father
And—die at home.

My heart is heavy,
My life runs slow;
To my Father in Heaven
I open my woe.

SCENE V.

What is it that has been?
Let me once recall again
The fear that came upon me,
And the story of my pain.

Yester-eve, as I sat alone,
Somebody entered, and read
How the Earl, at some foreign bath,
Had been ailing and now was dead;

And pointed to the place,
And the letters seemed to swim,
And the whole room whirling round
and round,
As my sight grew faint and dim.

For 'twas said that the new Earl,
His mourning done, would wed
The heiress of whom he told me before;
And I wished that I was dead.

And they muttered, with freezing
glances,
"They had thought 'twas thus, before;"
And I could not answer a single word
But fell upon the floor.

And now I lie ailing and weak,
Sick in body and mind and heart;
But to-morrow, if God help me,
I will rouse me and depart.

Oh, father, you will not spurn me,
Nor think me what they say,
But take us back to your heart and life,
And my grief shall fade away.

SCENE VI.

Oh, the sweet air of the hills,
That on this fair summer night
Breathes on me as I 'scape at last
From the glare of the long day,
Fróm the dust of the long plain,
And the rushing, maddening train!

Here I mount among the pines
By the path we knew so well.
All is there unchanged but I.
Hark! the thunder of the fall.
See the ash-grove where we sate.
There we lingered at the gate.

Nothing changed, but I am changed.
Slowly up the well-loved steep,
Failing footsteps toiling slow,
Where, upon the morning hills,
Twelve months since my feet would go
Bounding lightly as the roe.

None have seen me, that is well—
Yet if here I were to fail—
Courage! I shall reach there—Nay,
I must rest awhile; then climb
Slowly through the fragrant gloom,
Where my garden roses bloom.—

It is finished. Dear white head
Bending low upon thy book,
Homely lamp, familiar room,
Ye will welcome me, I know.
Open, father; I am come
Broken-hearted to my home!

ACT V.

SCENE I.—GWEN.

It is over now.
I have been a long time ill,
But to-day I am able to wander slow
To the churchyard round the hill.
'Tis there they have laid my little love,
Who lingered three little months—it was not long—
And there they will lay me too, ere the waning light grows strong.

It is but a little grave
Where my little one is laid,
But I keep it decked with white flowers every day,
And above, a kindly yew's protecting shade
Shelters it safe from rain and wind.
Sleep fast, my darling, sleep while yet you may;
Your mother will not linger long behind.

Dear child, I wonder when
The last great morning breaks and we shall wake,
If I may bear you then
Safe in my nursing arms for Him to take;
Or will He suffer you to come before,
White soul, while I am waiting at the door?

Dear little grave, I strew
Fresh autumn flowers and garden blooms on you;

I strew upon you roses white and red;
I fling my heart upon you, narrow bed!

Once, twelve months since, I launched my heart, a rose,
Where, lit with laughter, Love's sweet river goes,
And lo! once more the year's swift pinions move,
And now I cast it on the grave of love.

My love, my self, my child,
Lie buried here, and I am free again.
I would I were a slave; I loved my chain.
I would that I might see your sweet eyes mild;
They were your father's eyes, who loves not me——
I blame him not, but do forgive for thee.
It is not long I stay, my life, my dear,
Not long until we are together here.

Last year—it seems an age ago—
I had not seen him: then we went
Together on our road; and so,
By ways and converse innocent,
We gained at last the sacred gate
Of wedlock, and the hand of Fate
Lifted the latch, and we passed in
To the enchanted ground therein.
And now the winds of autumn rave,
And love lies dead within a grave.

Dear love, that liest there so still,
I go now till to-morrow's sun;
The autumn evening gathers chill,
The day is well-nigh done.
Sleep, dear, through all thy long untroubled night,
Sleep calmly till the Light!

SCENE II.

What? Can a second springtide burst,
As happy as the first,
From out the midst of dark autumnal days?
And can the dead roots start?
And can the withered heart
Rise upward from despair to joy and praise?
Yes, though with thrills of almost pain,
They can, again.

For as I turned yesterday, sad and slow,
From where my darling lies below,
Fulfilled with sad sweet thoughts of the things that have been,
I saw my dear father's kindly face,
As he came to meet me with hurried pace,
And a grave smile that told me the news that he bore was good;
But he slackened his steps when he saw me, and calmed his mood.
And I said, "Tell me all." And he answered, "'Tis well, my dear.
He was faithful; I knew it, and is, for his letter is here,"
And he drew it forth; and I knew that the writer was he,
And the title was that which he bears, and 'twas meant for me.

Then my father kissed my forehead and left me alone,
And I sat down to read what he said on a graveyard stone.
My love! He too had been ill, for a chill he caught
When the Earl lay dying abroad, well-nigh brought him to nought;

Growing to fevered heats and a wandering brain,
Till he raved for his nurse of last year to soothe him again;
And when, after many days, he had risen to find
The wife he was forced to leave, with unquiet mind,
He found me not, but they said I had gone to my home.
And so, with loving regards, he promised to come,
Almost ere his letter could reach me. Oh, love! oh, my dear!
I shall see you again, though 'tis late; and, meanwhile, a great fear
Rises up lest you grieve for your child whom you never have seen.

SCENE III.

He has come, he has been;
I have kissed him again and again.
Ah, God! but it is hard to die,
For it was not he was to blame at all, but I.
It was I, with my coward distrust and unreasoning fear,
Who could not put faith in my love, but shrank back from a sneer.
I am glad he was true throughout, though my sentence of doom
Sounds clear as I lie alone in my own white room.

To-day was a happy day,
When, upon my husband's breast,
I leant beside the grassy mound
Where our firstborn lies at rest.

And we mutely went again
By the dear old paths once more,
And I half forgot my sorrow
And the world was as before.

And he spoke with cheering words
Of the time when I should come
To cherish other children
In his old ancestral home.

Oh, my love as true as steel,
With your comfort kindly meant,
I would not seek to shadow
The light of your content;

But a hundred signs assure me,
Signs indefinite yet strong,
That my fate is wholly written
And I linger not for long.

Dearest, let us cling together,
Heart to heart and eye to eye;
Let us be together living,
And I shall not fear to die.

SCENE IV.—HENRY.

This is the last time that I tread
These unforgotten ways,
For to-morrow we follow the swallow over the wave.
We have spent our Mays;
Chill autumn has come and found us bent over a grave,
The grave of our youthful love and the hopes that are dead.

My dear, she is very pale and worn,
Save the brilliant spot that flushes on either cheek;

She recalls no longer the breezes and freshness of morn
As she leans upon me, slow and weak;
But I trust the warm summer sun and the honeyed air,
And the daily sights and sounds of things that are fair,
May rouse her and lighten her load of care.
Dear child! to think of her pining alone,
While I lay longing for her and too weak to write,
And afraid to disclose by a look or a tone
The thing which discovered had wrecked us quite!
Ah, me! 'twas a wretched time; and now it is done,
My father is gone and my son, and I only remain,
Weak in frame, with a fading wife and a burden of pain.
Dear soul, I will do what by love and by gold can be done;
I will bask with you safe from chill in the southern sun;
And I pray that when summer returns and the meadows grow green,
You may sit in my stately home, as happy and proud as a queen.

But, oh! what a fear is there
I dare not speak,
As I see the crimson deepen
On the pale wan cheek.
Nay, love, you are more lovely so,
A thousand times more fair,
Than when, twelve little months ago,
You went so free from care.
More dear you are, my love, and sweet,
A thousand times more dear,
Than when my heart forgot to beat
In the springtime of the year.
A thousand times more dear, my love,
A thousand times more dear,
For the tender pity that you move
And the anxious boding fear.

To-morrow, may it be
A new existence that we twain shall prove
Upon the western sea,
Bound for some happier land of health and love.

New hopes, new fears, new pains,
New joys; our hearts are ready, and we trust
The Omnipotent Will that reigns
Lifts not our hopes to dash them in the dust.

We hope; we cannot tell;
We go together alone, forgetting all;
For love, it shall be well,
Though life, a waning fire, may sink and fall.

Yet, if a prayer may move
Thy dread decrees, Omnipotent Will,
Spare, spare my innocent love
To my fond gaze a little longer still.

SCENE V.—GWEN.

Here is a calm bright day,
And my husband's tender voice;
He has climbed up from the village,
And I struggle to rejoice.

For I feel that to sorrow longer
For the little one who has fled,

My angel who rejoices
Among the blessèd dead,

Were a morbid grief, displeasing
To the Lord of joy and pain.
Nay, I will not sorrow longer;
I will strive to live again.

To the beautiful far countries
Where the soft unfailing sun
Beams cloudless through the winter,
And the flowers are never done,

He will take me, undelaying,
None beside us, only me,
By the ship that leaves to-morrow
The great city on the sea;

Every morning growing milder,
As we southward wing our way,
Till our swift ship casts her anchor
In some blue unruffled bay.

Stately cities I have read of,
Naples, Rome in all her pride—
I shall see them, a great lady,
With my husband at my side.

I shall see them when returning
From the sacred stream of Nile,
From vast tombs of unknown rulers,
And the Sphinx's changeless smile.

I shall see them. But in springtime,
When the bitter east is done,
I shall greet these dear old mountains
Shining in the sober sun;

I shall see my father smiling;
I shall bend once more again
O'er my sleeper's flower-strewed cradle,
Mingling tender hope with pain.

I shall come, though, maybe sooner,
When I shall not see nor hear;
For my love has given his promise
I shall rest beside my dear.

Farewell, oh dear, dear hills!
I do not know if I shall see you more.
Farewell! 'tis set of sun, the night is near.
Farewell! Below, the mist of autumn fills
The sleeping vale with winding vapours frore,
And hides from sight the yellow woods and sere.

But on the heights the day's declining fire
Bathes all the summits in a haze of gold.
Not yet the cold mist, stealing high and higher,
Touches the purple glow with fingers cold;
Not yet the ruddy light from out the sky
Goes, nor the orange shadows fade and die.

Here, far above the grave of dying day,
The clear night comes, and hills and vales grow dark.
But soon the first faint star, a lucid spark,
Glimmers; and, lo! the ineffable array!
A myriad suns for one! strange suns and far,
The hidden homes where blessèd spirits are!

Oh! night of Being, like the night of day,
How should I fear because your shadows fall?

Who knows from what fresh glories thy dark pall
For failing vision lifts the veil away?
What boundless spiritual orbits rise
Before the inward gaze of dying eyes?

Farewell, oh little grave,
Wherein I leave my buried heart awhile!
Thick yew, protect it well until I come;
Shelter it; let not winds of winter rave,
Nor sharp frosts fret nor snows, nor floods defile.
Here is my heart, and here my waiting home.
Farewell! farewell!

ACT VI.

SCENE I.—HENRY.

The sweet cold air of these untrodden hills
Breathes gently. Five and twenty years have gone
Since here my father trod, young, high in hope,
With all the world before him; nor as yet
The slow-consuming fire of deep decay
Had sapped his youthful hope, and left his life
To drag along its crippled journey, spent
In southern lands, wherever the chill east
Might come not; year by year: and last of all,
Since I have grown from boyhood, visiting
His country never; cut off and divorced
From all the joys that make existence sweet
To the aspiring great—the fame of men——
The name which every morning's broad-sheet takes
To the eyes and hearts of millions—all the thirst
For the statesman's high career sated, and lost
In a strange lethargy which bound him fast
To an inglorious ease. And yet I know
A time there was when the more generous part
Allured his growing soul. For I have found
Among his papers, time-stained notes which tell
Of deeper studies far than I have dreamt of;
Of high hopes and ambitions; such as fire
Those who, as he and I, are placed by Fate
On such high vantage that to will alone
And labour is enough, and each approach
Of honour, the Senate itself, which opens not
To lower birth until slow-creeping age
Derides the folly, flings back early doors
To their unbroken youth. These have I found.
And, oh most strange of all! close manuscripts
Of sceptical themes—my father's, his who was,
Of all men I have known, most rapt by faith
And very full of Godhead—doubts and fears
And anxious questionings, changed yet the same,
Differing in form alone from those which now

At our own Oxford echo through old rooms
Filled with young heated disputants, whose minds
Seize with a frolic eagerness the doubts
Which have perplexed all time. All these I found—
Ah, life is wonderful! We are the sport
Of great laws swinging slowly through an arc
Immeasurably vast. We doubt our doubts,
We hug our faiths, and fancy we are free
Who are shut fast of Time.
What power it was
Froze fast his life I know not, but sometimes
I think there must have come upon his life
Some overmastering passion, some young love
Such as the poets feign, for some young heart,
Which held him back and clogged him. Yet I know—
I would stake my life upon it—naught of wrong
Came nigh him. Only hardly love it was
That bound him to our mother—the high dame
He spoke of seldom, mourned seldomer still,
Whom scarcely I recall; whose clear cold face
Looks from beneath its coronet in my hall,
Statelier than any of our line. Poor mother!
She left us early—me and little Gwen;
Gwen, whom men know as Lady Gwendoline,
Our father's darling, who now comes with me
When hither, after years of exile spent
From home and homely scenes, we turn and leave
The turmoil of the Season and the chase
Of selfish worldlings, eager to secure
Those who are rich or fair.
I had found of late,
Mention among his letters here and there
Of this Welsh village, where, when he was young,
He spent a summer. So we left behind
The senseless whirl, and now a week or more
In this unclouded weather, bright and fair,
Have wandered careless o'er these purple hills,
Where once our father, older scarce than I,
Roved in that far-off summer. We have kept
Our name and rank a secret, and are free
To come and go at pleasure, as did he,
Dear father, years ago. Ah! sweet and strange,
The cycle of a life which turns and turns
Round to the self-same spot, changed yet the same;
The same but for the mystic beat of Time;
The same but for the ineffable change of Being,
Which in the same life, grown another, works
Infinite depths of change.
Somehow—I know not
If aught it be but fancy—but I think

The secret of his life, if such there were,
Lies hid within these hills; and I remember
That day, when he was dying and his breath
Came feebler even than wont—the unruffled sea
Was sapphire, and the orange-groves behind
Showed flecked with gold—we heard a far-off bell
Call from the campanile on the hill,
And then he roused himself: "Hark! 'tis the bell—
From the dear church-tower on the hill above—
They both are there—'tis a fair spot—the path
Is steep from out the village, but the air
Is balmy—'tis the well-remembered bell—
They are singing now in Welsh, and the sound soothes
The sleepers by the yew."
And now they tell me
There is indeed a church on yonder hill,
A little church half hidden by dark yews,
Which looks upon the long green vale and scans
The ever-winding river. So my sister,
Who learnt in Italy the sketcher's art,
Has gone before, armed with all fit devices
To snare the fleeting landscape. It is time
To join her. I must hasten; it may be
(She is not strong, dear sister, but soon tires)
She tires of sketching and awaits me. Father,
I would that you were with us, and might breathe
This sweet cold air again as young as I.

SCENE II.—GWEN.

How fair and fresh from this gray churchyard shows
The rich green vale beneath. Upon the deep
Lush meadows, where the black herds grazing seem
Like rooks upon the grass, a silvery gleam,
Now lost and now discovered, marks the place
Where winds the brimming river. Here, thick woods
Of oak and beech upon the sloping banks
Bend to the shadowy stream which glides beneath.
There, through the emerald meads, shallow or deep,
It hastes or loiters, till the tall dark elms,
Grouped by the distance, hide it. And above,
On either hand the eternal mountains rise,
Pine-clad below, upon whose upper heights
The unfenced heather purples. All the sky
Is flecked with soft white fleecy clouds which cast
Bewildering charms of shadow; and beyond,
A shining sapphire drawn 'twixt earth and sky,
Glitters the summer sea. Most beautiful

Thou art, oh motherland, which I have known
As yet so little. Beautiful art thou
My second mother, sunny Italy,
Where the blue heaven is brighter, and the sea
Gives back a clearer azure. But for me
There grows a tenderer charm from these green fields
And purple hills and white-flecked skies, denied
To thy more brilliant landscape. Perhaps it is
In part because my father loved them well,
Dear father whom I loved, and who loved me
Closer than might a mother.
Well! enough!
I will draw no more to-day, but let the scene
Sink on my soul, and fix itself, and breed
Fresh scenes of beauty to inspire my hand
When the short days are dull, and all the sky
A gloomy pall, and gusts of wintry rain
Beat on the darkling city.
I will muse
A little till my brother comes, and think
How good he was whose memory brings us here;
How careless of himself, how prompt to give
Whatever good a father's hand can give
To his motherless girl. I scarcely had a thought
He did not share, and as I think, indeed,
He kept no secret from his earliest years
Of which I knew not. He has told me all—
His studious youth, his feeble health, the doubt
Of God and man which for a while obscured
His noble brain and left it impotent—
And somehow it was here, upon these hills,
From out this very spot, it may be, gazing
On all the loveliness of earth and sky
And silver sea, the waters of his soul
Were loosèd, and flowed onward strong and clear,
To join the Infinite Deep!
There comes a cloud
Upon the sky and gusts of sudden wind;
The beauty fades, as treacherous as youth,
And fleeting, and I thought I heard a roll
Of thunder drawing near. I would my brother
Were come. I am afraid. The church is closed—
It is not here as 'tis in Italy,
Where all who choose may kneel as welcome guests
Within God's House; but yon thick yew that stands
Above that gleaming cross will shelter me
From heavier storms than this.
Here I am safe.
See with what tender care some loving hand
Keeps green the sward, and sets it round with flowers
That bloom as in a garden! One red rose

Twines round the cross, and sheds in this rude wind
Its crimson petals. Two graves stretch beneath,
And three sleep under. Ah! 'tis the old vicar's
Who lived here forty years and died last year.
"ALSO"—ah, see my brother comes at last—
"ALSO OF"—strange, almost my name —GWENLLIAN,
HIS DAUGHTER, WHO DIED AGED TWENTY YEARS"—
The year?—one year before my father's marriage—
Ah me! these two were parted long, long years!
"COUNTESS OF"—What is this? My father's title!
Father, what means it?—"AND HER INFANT SON
HENRY, LORD"—What, my brother's? What is this?
It is strange. Quick! I am fainting . . .
Henry! Henry!

EPILOGUE.

The silent Forces of the World,
Time, Change, and Fate, deride us still;
Nor ever from the hidden summit, furled,
Where sits the Eternal Will,
The clouds of Pain and Error rise
Before our straining eyes.

It is to-day as 'twas before,
From the far days when Man began to speak,
Ere Moses preached or Homer sung,
Ere Buddha's musing thought or Plato's silvery tongue.
We pace our destined path with failing footsteps weak;
A little more we see, a little more
Of that great orb which shineth day and night
Through the high heaven, now hidden, now too bright,
The Sun to which the earth on which we are,
Life's labouring world, is as the feeblest star.

Nor this firm globe we know
Which lies beneath our feet;
Nor by what grades we have grown and yet shall grow,
Through chains of miracle, more and more complete;
By what decrees the watery earth
Compacted grew the womb of countless birth;
Nor, when the failing breath
Is taken by the frozen lips of Death,
Whither the Spoiler, fleeing with his prey,
The fluttering, wandering Wonder bears away.

The powers of Pain and Wrong,
Immeasurably strong,
Assail our souls, and chill with common doubt
Clear brain and heart devout:
War, Pestilence, and Famine, as of old,
The lust of the flesh, the baser lust of gold,
Vex us and harm us still;
Fire comes, and crash and wreck, and lives are shed
As if the Eternal Will itself were dead;

And sometimes Wrong and Right, the thing we fear,
The thing we cherish, draw confusedly near;
We know not which to choose, we cannot separate
Our longing and our hate.

But Love the Conqueror, Love, Immortal Love,
Through the high heaven doth move,
Spurning the brute earth with his purple wings,
And from the great Sun brings
Some radiant beam to light the House of Life,
Uplifts our grosser thought, and makes us pure;
And to a Higher Purpose doth mature
Our trivial days, and calms the ignoble strife,
Raises the waning life with his sweet breath,
And from the arms of Death
Soars with it to the eternal shore,
Where sight or thought of evil comes no more.

Love sitteth now above,
Enthroned in glory,
And yet hath deigned to move
Through life's sad story.
Fair Name, we are only thine!
Thou only art divine!
Be with us to the end, for there is none
But thou to bind together God and Man in one!

THE ODE OF LIFE.

THE ODE OF CREATION.

A DARK and boundless deep,
And a blind height above,
Untrodden fields of sleep,
Wherein no force may move,
Where every sound is still,
Nor breathes a living breath;—
These are the heights, these are the depths, these are the voids of Death.

But slowly on the lifeless plain
There wakes a far-sent ray, a little star,
A tiny spark of Being from afar,
A throb of precious pain.

It is done, it has been, it has risen, the glimmer of Life,
The dark void withdrawing around,
It breaks with a whisper of sound,
Through the wastes of silence and sleep,
There is no more stillness nor Death,
The great Universe wakes with a deep-drawn singultient breath.
The great orbs cohere and spin on their measureless ways—
—The great suns awaken and shine, ringed with girdles of fire every one—
All the worlds are on fire and ablaze—
The flaming globes circle and whirl each one round its sun

—The hot seas seethe and bellow—
the fixed hills glow—
And the blast of Creation burns fierce
while the centuries grow;
And Life and Time have begun!

Myriads on myriads of years!
Or was there indeed no time except
in the Infinite Mind?
And was there indeed no ceaseless
circling of spheres?
Since no sentient eye might mark the
peripheries wind,
And at length the great Life of the
worlds grown concentrate would
thrill
Through some lowly speck of matter,
which, waxing apart,
Grew conscious by slow degrees, and
blossomed in Will;
Weak centres of Force, which floated
as motes in a beam,
Automatic, contracting, expanding, but
consciousless yet.
Till a stronger force working within
them would raise them once more,
Pushing with inchoate fin as if with an
oar
Afloat on the slow warm stream;
And another Creation has come and a
new-begun strife,
With this primal glimmer of life.

Myriads on myriads of years! if Time
there were yet,
When no soul was by to remember or
to forget;
The fin growing stronger, and changing
to wing or to claw,
Struggle on struggle, sentience, con-
sciousness, ravin, and pain,
Monstrous and mailèd forms in the
ooze, or hurtling thro' air,
Waging through æons of time the in-
effable struggles which gain
Order thro' waste and thro' wear.
Till the mastodon stalks forth in might
with hoof and with jaw,
And the law of the Higher prevails, the
Ultimate Law,
And the cooler earth teems with life, on
land and in sea:
Life organic in beast, fish, or bird, in
herb or in tree,
Life dominant, life exulting with quick-
coming breath,
Life that fades down and sinks in the
silence and slumber of Death.
But no soul to mark the struggle nor
thought which might turn
To whence those weird fires burn.
Successions, progressions, a scheme of
insensible life,
One Will alone directing the infinite
strife,
One Force, one Eye, one Sole and
Regarding Mind,
In a Universe deaf and blind!

And was it some Inner Law,
Some hidden potency of Force,
Or some creative breath Divine,
Which sped the creature on its upward
course?
Until at last it woke and saw,
With visual forces fine,
The Godhead that was round it every-
where,
The spiritual essence fair,
Which doth innerve this outward show
of things—
And filled the brute with high imagin-
ings,
And winging it with new-found wings
Lifted its aspect to the infinite sky,
Where, in the Light of the Creative Eye

Its ancient slough away it cast,
And rose to Man at last!

How know we or can trace
The first beginnings of all Time,
Who know not yet indeed how this our race
Rises to heights sublime?
In darkness does our life begin,
Hidden and fenced within.
In darkness and obscurity
Dwell the blind germs which yet shall be.
In darkness the slow rolling months fulfil
The pre-ordained will.
And even in childhood's earliest days,
No memory-haunted ways
Take our first footsteps; but in deep
And unremembered tracts of sleep
The immature creature dwells, nor can recall
Its former self or primal state at all.

THE ODE OF INFANCY.

Oh, little child!
Stretched on thy mother's knees, with steadfast gaze
And innocent aspect mild,
Viewing this novel scene in mute amaze,
Following the moving light, thy mother's smile,
And storing up the while
New precious knowledge till thou com'st to be
Sage it may be or clown—
Soaring or sinking down,
To topmost heights of weal or depths of misery;
How shall I dare to mark thy innocent look,
And write as in a book
Thy infinite possibilities of life;
What fate awaits thee in the coming strife,
What joys, what triumphs in the growing years,
What depths of woe and tears?

I see thee lie
Safe in thy silken cradle, sunk in down,
Within thy father's palace-chambers fair;
Thy guarded slumbers breathing tempered air;
The soft eyes, full of yearning, watching by;
Caressing arms waiting thy waking cry:
All luxury and state which can assuage
Life's painful heritage;
The prayers of a people swell for thee
Up to the careless skies which cover all.
And yet it may be thine to fall
Far from thy loved and native land,
And end thy imperfect, innocent life-tale here,
Forsaken on a savage desert strand,
Pierced through and through by some barbarian spear.

I see thy tiny face
Pale, worn with hunger, and large hollow eyes,
Upon the frozen way-side laid
Stiffening in thy dead mother's cold embrace.
I hear thy piteous cries
When the sot flings thee down with limbs that bleed—
Flings thee, and takes no heed;
Weak, helpless, born to misery, girt round
With vice and sin and shame, in sight and sound.

Poor life foredoomed, already sunk and lost;
Too often sent to tread the ways of death
With childish failing breath;
Yet ofttimes holding power
To bloom a virgin flower
Upon the untrodden heights closed to the multitude,
Among the wise and good.

Or with brown face thou comest and limb,
Naked, on the warm soil that bears the palm;
Or haply the young heir of all the dim
And half-forgotten realms whose ruins stand
Sown lion-haunted on the deathlike calm
Which wraps the Egyptian or Assyrian sand,
Reared 'midst the dust of empires; or art now
As through all history thou wert, the child
Of savage parents, rude and wild,
Springing and falling; born to flower and seed,
Or sink upon the uncaring earth, a weed
Trodden by the pitiless feet of cruel men
With hearts that ape the tiger's; or art born
In the old, old empire, which hath long outworn
God and the hopes of man, and yet coheres,
Propped by its own far-reaching bulk, as when
It did emerge from savagery and grew,
Oh, child! as yet may you,
To worldly strength, and knowledge, and dead lore
Of wisdom fled before,
And dull content, and soulless hopes and fears.

Wherever thou mayest be,
To me thou art wonderful and strange to see—
Busied with trifles, rapt with simple toys,
As men with graver joys.
I hear thy lisping accents slowly reach
The miracle of speech;
I mark thy innocent smile;
I treasure up each baby wile
Which smooths the brow of thought, the front of care.
Thou royal scion, born to be the heir
Of all the unrecorded days, since first
Man rose to his full being, once blest, and then accurst!

In weal and woe and ill
Thou art a miracle still.
From snow-bound hut to equatorial strand,
Above thee still regarding angels stand;
While thy brief life-tale fleeteth like a dream
Across Creation's glass.
Dark powers of ill press thee on either side,
As now thy swift years pass,
Revealing on the young soul's tablets white
The eternal characters of Right;
Or sometimes with the growing years grown strong
The unhallowed signs of wrong.

Oh, little child! thou bringest with thee still,
As Moses, parting from the fiery hill,
Some dim reflection in thine eyes,
Some sense of Godhead, some indefinite wonder

As of one drifted here unwillingly;
Who knows no speech of ours, and yet doth keep
Some dumb remembrance of a gracious home
Which lights his waking hours and fills his sleep
With precious visions which unbidden come;
Some golden link which nought of earth can sunder,
Some glimpse of a more glorious land and sea!

Oh, precious vision fleeting past!
Oh, age too fair to last!
For soon new gifts and powers are thine,
And growing springs and summers bring
Boyhood or girlhood hastening,
And nerve the agile limb, and teach,
With the new gift of speech,
The wonders that stand round on every side,
And Life's imperial portals opening gradually wide.

THE ODE OF CHILDHOOD.

I. BOYHOOD.

FAIR budding age,
Which next upon life's stage
Passest a fairy dream before the eyes,
High health and bounding limb,
Eager and stretching towards the wished-for prize;
Whate'er the passing care that takes thy thought,
I catch the sweet brisk scent of trodden grass
When through the golden afternoon
Of a long day in June,
Until the twilight dim,
The playfield echoes with the joyous noise
Of troops of agile boys,
Who, bare-armed, throw the rapid-bounding ball;
Who shout and race and fall.
I see the warm pool fringed with meadow-sweet,
Where stream in summer, with eager feet
Through gold of buttercups and crested grass
The gay processions stripping as they pass.
I hear the cool and glassy depths divide
As the bold fair young bodies, far more fair
Than ever sculptured Nereids were,
Plunge fearless down, or push, with front or side,
Through the caressing wave.
I mark the deadly chill, thro' the young blood,
When some young life, snatched from the cruel flood,
Looks once upon the flowers, the fields, the sun,—
Looks once, and then is done!
Or the grey, frosty field, and the great ball
Urged on by flying feet.
Or when the skate rings on the frozen lake,
The gliding phantoms fleet,
Rosy with health, and laughing though they fall.
Or by the rapid stream or swirling pool,
The fisher, with his pliant wand.
Or by the covert-side, taking his stand,

The shooter, watching patient hour by hour,
With that hard youthful heart that young breasts hold,
Till the fur glances through the brake;
As when our savage sires wandered of old,
Hungering through primal wastes. I see them all,
The brisk, swift days of youth, which cares for nought
But for the joy of living; scarce a thought
Of Love, or Knowledge, or at best
Such labour as gives zest
To the great joy of living. Oh, blest time!
For which each passing hour rings out a chime
Of joy-bells all the year; ay, tho' through days
Of ill thou farest, and unhappy ways;
Or whether on the sun-struck lands thy feet
Are the young savage hunter's, lithe and fleet,
Turning at night-fall to thy father's cot,
Bathed in the full white moonlight; or dost stand
'Mid the hushed plains of some forsaken land;—
Where'er thou art, oh, boyhood! thou art free
And fresh as the young breeze in summer born
On sun-kissed hills or on the laughing sea,
Or gay bird-music breathing of the morn,
Or some sweet rose-bud pearled with early dew,
As brief and fair as you.

II. GIRLHOOD.

Or in another channel still more sweet,
Life's current flows along,
Ere yet the tide of passion, full and strong,
Hurries the maiden's feet.
Oh, sweet and early girlish years
Of innocent hopes and fears!
Busied with fancies bright and gay,
Which Love shall chase away,
When, with the flutter of celestial wings,
He stirs the soul forth from its depths, and brings
Healing from trouble. Oh, deep well
Of fairy fancies undefiled!
Oh, sweet and innocent child!

Now with thy doll I see thee full of care,
Or filled already with the mother's air,
Hushing thy child to sleep.
And now thyself immersed in slumbers, deep
Yet light, I see thee lie.
And now the singer, lifting a clear voice
In soaring hymns or carols that rejoice,
Or busied with thy seam, or doubly fair
For the unconscious rapture of thy look
Lost in some simple book.
Whate'er the colour of thy face,
Thou art fulfilled with grace.
Oh, little maiden, fair or brown!
Thine is the simple beauty which doth crown
The dreams of happy fathers, who have past
By Love and Passion, and have come
To know pure joys of home;
And for the hurry and haste of younger years,
Have taken the hearth that cheers,

And the fair realm of duty, and delight
Of innocent faces bright
And the sweet wells of deep untroubled love
A daughter's name can move.

In every clime and age I see thee still,
Since the rude nomads wandered forth at will
Upon the unbounded Aryan pastures wild—
There thou wert, oh, fair child!
"The milker" 'twas they called thee; all day long
Tending the browsing herds with high-voiced song;
Or on some sun-warmed place
Upon the flower-faced grass,
Watching the old clouds pass,
And weaving wreaths with such wild grace
And sprightly girlish glee
As Proserpine did once in sunny Sicily.

Or maybe by some widowed hearth—
The fairest, saddest sight on earth,
Filled too soon with sweet care,
And bringing back the voice and air
Of thy dead mother; thou art set
An innocent virgin-mother, childlike yet.
Thy baby sisters on thy loving arm
Sleep fast, secure from harm.
Thou hast no time for game or toy,
Or other thought but this;
Finding thy full reward, thy chiefest joy,
In thy fond father's kiss.

Or under palms to-day,
Thy childhood fleets away;
Or by the broadening shadow hid,
Of tomb or pyramid;
In stainless whiteness: or maybe
Forlorn in haunts of misery;
Thou keepest on thy rounded face
Some unforgotten trace
Of the old primal days unsung,
Of the fresh breezes of pure morn
When the first maiden child was born,
And Time was young.

Fair streams which run as yet
Each in its separate channel from the snows;
Boyhood and girlhood; while Life's banks are set
With blooms that kiss the clear lymph as it flows,
One swift and strong and deep,
One where the lilies sleep;—
Fair streams, which soon some stress of Life and Time
Shall bring together,
Under new magical skies and the strange weather
Of an enchanted clime.

THE ODE OF YOUTH.

Now upon the tree of life there rise
Before our wondering eyes
Two strange new flowers of varied hue.
The tree is grown,
The flowers are blown,
There is nought wanting to its early sweetness;
But with a fair completeness,
The purple bloom and white
Fill the entranced, admiring sight.
The tree is grown, the tree is strong;
Oh! dear to art and song!

Fair time of Flowers! within whose chalice sweet
Lurks Youth with rosy feet,
And Love with purple folded wing,
And birdlike thoughts that sing.

I.—Early Manhood.

And first, oh youth, I see thee with the plume
Of thy thick locks upon thy forehead set,
And thy frank eyes kindling with fire, or dim
With soaring thoughts of heaven, or wet
With kindly dews of pity; the straight limb
And the strong arm, and force that never tires;
The cheek and lip touched with the early down
Of manhood's fullest crown;
The heart, which hardly thought of passion fires;
The mind, which opens like a flower in spring
To all the wanton airs the seasons bring;—
The young existence self-contained no longer,
But pressing outward hour by hour,
Fired with a thirst continually stronger,
For some supreme white flower.
Whatever be the prize—
Whether upon the difficult heights of Thought,
Or 'midst the white laborious dust of Duty,
Or on the peaks of Power, the bloom be sought,
Or in the flush and thrill of the new Beauty
Born of a maiden's eyes.

Oh, happiest age of all
When hope is without measure
And life a thrill of pleasure,
And health is high and force unspent,
Nor Disappointment yet, nor sordid Care,
Nor yet Satiety, nor the cold chill
Which creeps upon the world-worn heart to kill
All higher hope, and leaves us to despair;
Nor doubt of God or men can touch, but all
The garden ground of Life is opened wide;
And lo! on every side
The flowers of spring are blooming, and the air
Is scented, and sweet song is everywhere,
And young eyes read from an enchanted book,
With rapt entrancèd look,
Loves legend and the Dream of days to be,
And fables fair of Life's mythology,
Through the still hours till dewy twilight fall.

Whatever be the page—
Whether of metaphysical riddles faint,
Or the rapt visions of some ancient seer,
The burning thoughts of saint,
Or maxims of the sagè—
Thou comest, oh youth, with thought as sure,
With mind severe and pure;
Thou takest afresh, with each returning year,
The fair thin dreams, the philosophic lore
Of the great names of yore—

Plato the wise, Confucius, Socrates,
The blessed Gautama—all are thine;
Upon thee year by year the words divine
Of our great Master, falling like the dew,
Sway thee, to hate the wrong, to love the true;
For thee the fair poetic page is spread
Of the great living and the greater dead;
For thee the glorious gains of Science lie
Stretched open to thine eye;
And to thy fresh and undimmed brain,
The mysteries of Number and of Space
Seem easy to explain;
Thou lookest with clear gaze upon the long
Confusions of the Race, the paradox of Wrong;
And dost not fear to trace,
With youth's strong fiery faith that knows no chill,
The secret of Transgression, the prime source
Of Good and Evil, and the unfailing course
Of the Ineffable Will.

And sometimes life, glowing with too fierce fire,
O'er sea and land in rapid chase,
Snatches thee with tumultuous will,
And careless, breathless pace.
Sometimes a darker thought
Comes on thee as a shadow of night,
Marring thy young life's white,
And some new longing in the past untaught,
And at thy side shamefast Desire
Stands unreproved and guides thy bashful feet
To where, girt by dim depths of solitude,
Sits Fancy, disarrayed, in a deep wood;
And ah, but Youth runs swift and Pleasure is sweet!

And sometimes, too, looking with too bold eye
Upon the unclouded sky,
Sudden the heavens are hidden, and the great Sun
Sinks as if day were done,
And the brain reels and all the life grows faint,
Smitten by too much light; or a thick haze
Born out of sense doth overcloud
The soul, and leaves it blind and in amaze,
And the young heart is dull and the young brain
Dark till God shine again.

Oh, fairest age of all!
Whate'er thy race or clime,
To-day ten thousand cities on thee call,
Broad plain and palm-fringed isle.
Thine is the swelling life, the eager glance and smile,
Oh, precious fruit of Life and Time!
Oh, worker of the world! to whose young arm
The brute earth yields and wrong, as to a charm;
Young seaman, soldier, student, toiler at the plough,
Or loom, or forge, or mine, a kingly growth art thou!
Where'er thou art, though earthy oft and coarse,
Thou bearest with thee hidden springs of force,
Creative power, the flower, the fruitful strife,
The germ, the potency of Life,

Which draws all things to thee unwittingly.
The Future lies within thy loins, and all the Days to be
To thee Time giveth to beget,
The Thought that shall redeem and lift Man higher yet.

II. MAIDENHOOD.

But lo! another form appears
Upon Life's glass. Oh, pure and white!
Oh, delicate and bright!
Oh, primal growth of Time!
Sweet maidenhood! that to a silvery chime
Of music, and chaste fancies undefiled,
And modest grace and mild,
Comëst, best gift of God to men,
As fair to-day as when
The first man, waking from his deep
And fancy-haunted sleep,
Found his strength spent, and at his side
His fair dream glorified;
High-soaring note, leading harmonious song
Through secular discords long.
Oh, lily of Life's garden! fair of hue
And sweet of scent, watered with heaven's own dew;
Fair being, holding hidden motherhood
And undeveloped good;
Implicit in thee, even as white blooms hold
Their fragrant globes of gold,
Men know no praise they can withhold from thee,
Oh, sweet virginity!
Since Artemis first trod the youngling earth.
Thou glorious and surpassing birth!
The Vestal fires were thine, the convents cold
Are thine as those of old.
To thee, when strong sweet flowers of Life and Sense,
Scent gross, we turn, oh white and gracious innocence!

Yea, still, while life flows fast and free,
To thee we turn a world-worn eye.
Throbbing delights are youth's and pulses high;
Yet these at last will ebb, and then to thee
We turn, oh fair pale lily, clothed with purity!

For sure it is indeed
Two streams through Life's ground flow, and both are good—
The one whose goal is gracious motherhood;
The other in the cloister pale and dim
Finding sufficient meed
In pure observance, rite, and soaring hymn.
We may not blame nor hold them wrong
Who through their lives their liturgies prolong,
Even though the prize of motherhood be great.
But always thine, oh, blest estate!
Thine it is, under youth's hot sun, to keep
Celestial snows and pure abysses deep.

I see thy fair expanding mind,
A precious blossom parcel-blown,
Not with the young man's noble rage,
But with a gentler radiance all thy own,
Fixed now on history's fabled page,
Now on the bard's diviner thought,
And now by some deep music stirred,

Deeper than any spoken word,
Or sweet love-story soft as southern wind.

Dear flower and fair to mortal eye,
Whatever be thy age, thy clime, thy race,
Whether the gentle curve of thy young breast
Be hidden in white lawn or stand confest
In innocent brown nakedness and grace,
Thou art the high and unattainèd prize
Of all the generations that have been;
Upon Life's throne thou sittest as a Queen,
And at thy gracious feet
The ages kneel to thy eternal Truth.
Thy pure and spotless innocence,
And free from stain of Time and Sense,
Thy undefilèd youth.

White flower of Life's tree,
Love like a wanton bee,
Shall fly to thee, and from thy deep cold cells
Rifle the honey. Tranquil stream,
That from the chill heart of the untrodden snow,
So calm and clear dost flow;
Spring wakes beneath the gleam
Of a new sun which swells
A warm and rapid torrent strong,
Soon in the sunny balmy weather,
To break its banks and bear together
Your mingled streams along.

THE ODE OF LOVE.

I AM afraid
To sing thee, oh Immortal Love, who know
By what majestic voices long ago
Thy eulogy was said.
I do not dare
To bring a voice which thou didst never train,
To the high-soaring difficult air
Of thy celestial strain.
Yet how of Life to sing, and yet not tell of Love;
And since thou art the source of song,
And all our hearts dost move,
I will essay thy praise nor fear to do thee wrong.

For see, the lovers go
With lingering steps and slow,
By dim arcades where sunbeams scarcely reach;
On sea-struck northern beach;
Or breathless tropic strand,
By evening breezes fanned;
Or through the thick life-laden air
Of some great city; or through the hush
Of summer twilights 'midst the corn;
When all the dying heavens glow and blush
Or the young moonlight curves its crescent horn.

Oh, wondrous bond that binds
In one sweet concord separate minds,
And from their union gives
To the rapt gazer's eye
A finer essence and more high,
A young and wingèd God, who lives
In purer air and seeks a loftier sky!
If growing cares and lower aims should banish
All thought of heavenly hopes and higher things,
While we can mount upon thy soaring wings
They shall not wholly vanish.

Thou art the immortal part of man, the soul,
Which, scorning earth's control,
Lifts us from selfish thought and grovelling gains.
Thou always, whilst thy power remains,
Canst pierce the dull dead weight of cloud,
By which our thought is bowed,
And raise our clear and cleansèd eyes
To the eternal skies.

No sting of sense it is
That gives thee wing and lifts thee up to heaven.
Too high art thou for this;
Ethereal, pure, free from earth's grosser leaven.
If ought of sense be thine, 'tis but the air,
Whose weight can lift thee up to soar,
Which can thy heavenward pinions bear
From brute earth more and more
Up to the fount of Power and Love
Whence all things move.

And see, the lovers go
With lingering steps and slow,
Over all the world together, all in all,
Over all the world! Great empires fall;
The onward march of Man seems spent;
The nations rot in dull content;
The blight of war, a bitter flood,
From continent to continent,
Surges in waves of blood;
The light of knowledge sinks, the fire of thought burns low;
There seems scant thought of God; but yet
One power there is men ne'er forget,
And still through every land beneath the skies,
Rapt, careless, looking in each other's eyes,
With lingering steps and slow,
The lovers go.

A pillar of light
Goes evermore before their dazzled eyes.
Purple and golden-bright,
Youth's vast horizons spread and the unbounded skies.
Oh blessèd dream which for awhile dost hide
The sorrows of the world and leave life glorified.
Oh blessed light that risest still,
Young eyes and souls to fill!

Linked arms and hearts aglow;
Wherever man is more than brute,
To this self-sacrifice our natures grow.
Rapt each in each they go, and mute,
Listening to the sweet song
Which Love, with mystic accents, all day long
Sings to them, like a hidden bird,
Sweeter than e'er was seen or heard,
Which from life's thick-leaved tree
Sings sadly, merrily,
A strange, mixed song, a changeful strain,
Which rises now to joy and jollity,
Now seemeth to complain;
But with a sweeter music far than is
Of earthborn melodies.

He sees within her eyes
That which his nature needs to be complete—
The grace, the pureness, the diviner sweet,
Which to rude souls and strong our Life denies;
The vision of his nightly dream;
More pure than e'er did seem
The Nymphs of old, by wood, or hill, or stream.

She views in him the strong
Deep note which adds the fulness to life's song;
High aims and thoughts that glow
She does not dream, she cannot know
What turbid forces rude and wild
Sully his youth's tumultuous flow;
She, full of virgin fancies, pale and mild.

They draw to each other, they flow to the deep as one,
Together thro' all lands beneath the sun,
In twin attempered streams, set side by side,
So near that scarce a footpace may divide
Their separate depths, and this maybe is best;
Or maybe in each other lost,
In calm or tempest-tost,
One broad full river they roll on to the sea,
One full accordant harmony,
High song and deep, one perfect note;
Or maybe troublous as the wintry wave,
Or some hoarse accent of a tuneless throat,
They know no longer peace or rest,
Ill-mated, hapless, self-opprest,
Till silent in the grave.

Yet draw together, draw together still,
Fair souls and free, fair souls and young!
Still shall thy praise, Immortal Love, be sung!
Thou art the Spirit which doth animate;
The Universal Will,
Which speeds the Race upon the ways of Fate;
Which speeds it onwards, gaining strength
Little by little, line on line,
Till, as our hope is, risen at length
To plenitude Divine,
It comes to what high issue rare
The Future shall prepare.

THE ODE OF PERFECT YEARS.

Now flower and perfect fruit
Together dress the tree,
High midsummer has come, midsummer mute
Of song, but rich to scent and sight.
The sun is high in heaven, the skies are bright
And full of blessedness,
High hope and wild endeavour
Have fled or sunk for ever;
Only the swifter seasons onward press.
And every day that goes
Is a full-scented, full-blown garden rose,
Orbèd, complete.
And every hour brings its own burden sweet
Of daily duty, precious care;
Wherefrom the visible landscape calm and clear
Shows finer far, and the high heaven more near,
Than ever morning skies of sunrise were.

I miss the unbounded hope of old,
The freshness and the glow of youth:
I miss the fever and the fret,
The luminous haze of gold.
I see a mind clearer and calmer yet,
A more unselfish love, a more unclouded truth;
Such gain I take, and this
More gracious shows and fair than that I miss.

I. FATHERHOOD.

Oh, father! sitting at thy hearth,
With sunny heads around and lisping talk,
For whom the world without and all the earth
Is nought to this; and to the strong deep love
Which, mixed with pity, all thy soul doth move.
Strong worker, watching o'er the tottering walk
And feeble limbs and growing thought and brain,
Rejoicing in each new-found gain
As the first sire, alone in Paradise;
And patient and content to work all day,
If with the eve returning from thy toil
Thou canst put off the sad world's stain and soil,
And bending downward to thy children's eyes,
Rise cleansed and pure as they.
I know not if life holds a more divine
Or fairer lot than thine.
Strong, patient worker, king of those who can
To its high goal of Things to be,
Its goal of Fate and Mystery,
Lead forth the race of Man!

Thy way is ofttimes hard,
And toilsome oft thy feet;
Thine are the days of anxious care,
When the spent brain reels, or the strong arm tires;
Yet all the ease and charm of days that were,
And Pleasure paling all her fading fires,
Allure no more, but the tired hunter now,
Or now the worker with the furrowed brow
On frozen wastes or sun-struck thou dost show;
By mart, or loom, or mine, or bending down
Chained to thy desk within the stifling town,
Thou toilest daily that thy brood may live.
Cares are thine, cares, and the unselfish mind
Which spends itself for others and can find
How blest it is without return to give.
Whate'er thy race or speech, thou art the same;
Before thy eyes Duty, a constant flame,
Shines always steadfast with unchanging light,
Through dark days and through bright.

Sometimes, by too great misery bowed down,
Or poison-draughts brought lower than the beast,
Thou comest to hate the hollow eyes around,
Dreading thy cares increased,
And dost despise thy own,
And canst thy dead heart steel against their cries,
And mark unmoved the hunger in their eyes;
Or sometimes, filled with love, art powerless to aid.
Oh, misery, to make our souls afraid!

Or if a happier lot
Await thee, yet by precious wells of tears
Thy life's road goes, vain hopes and anxious fears.

Thine 'tis, perchance, to mark the grassy mound
Which keeps, within the churchyard's narrow ground,
Thy darling who is not.
Hopes sunk in tears, tears that ascend to hope;
Such is thy horoscope,
Oh father, standing by the little grave,
And impotent to save!

Thy heart is moved with pity
For thy young growing lives, who needs must come
To leave the safe and sacred walls of home;
For whose young souls, Life, like a cruel city,
Spreads out her nets of sin.
Thou knowest well of old
The strong allurements which they scarce may shun,
The subtle wiles, the innocent lives undone,
The tide of passion, scorning all control,
And thou art filled with an immense despair,
Wherefrom thy heart beats slow, thy eyes grow dim,
As when of yore thou heardst them lisp a hymn
With early childish lips: thou canst not bear
To think of that young whiteness soiled and foul,
Or that thick darkness blotting the young soul.

Yet from thy grief and pain
Comes oftimes greater gain
Than all thy loss.
Thou knowest what it is to grieve,
And from the burden of thy cross
Thou comest to believe.
Thou who hast lost and yet dost love,
Thou, too, a Father hast in some dim sphere above,
Who doth regard thy joys, thy miseries
Thy petty doubts of Him, thy feeble learning,
Thy faults, thy pains, thy childish doubt and yearning,
Even as thou dost these.

II. MOTHERHOOD.

But here is one who over all the earth
Is worshipped and is blest,
Who doth rejoice from holier springs of mirth,
And sorrow from a deeper fount of tears,
On whose sweet bosom is our earliest rest,
Whose tender voice that cheers
Is our first memory, which still doth last
Thro' all our later past—
The love of love or child, the world-worn strife,
The turmoil and the triumphs of a life—
The sweet maid-mother, pure and mild,
The deep love undefiled.

Thou art the universal praise
Of every human heart, the secret shrine
Where seer and savage keep a dream divine
Through growing and declining days:
And but for thee
And thy unselfish love, thy sacrifice,
Which brings heaven daily nearer to our eyes,

Men whom the rude world stains, men chilled by doubt,
Would find no ray of Deity
To fire a Faith gone out.

Our life from a twofold root
Springs upwards to the sky,
One, surface only, shared with tree and brute,
And one, as deep and strong as heaven is high.
Spirit and sense,
Each bears its part and dwells in innocence
Yet only grown together can they bear
The one consummate fruit.
The flower is good, the flower is fair,
But holds no lasting sweetness in its petals thin,
No seed of life within.
But the ripe fruit within its orbèd gold
Doth hidden secrets hold;
Within its honied wells set safe and deep,
The Future lies asleep.
Of shamefastness our being is born,
Of shamefastness and scorn.

Oh, wonder, that so high dost soar!
Oh, vision, blest for evermore!
With every throe of birth
Two glorious Presences make glad the earth
The stainless mother and the Eternal Child.
Of the heart comes love, of the heart and not the brain;
To heights where Thought comes not can Love attain:
We cannot tell at all, we may not know,
How to such stature high our lower natures grow;
What strong instinctive thrill
The mother's being doth fill,
And raises it from miry common ways,
Up to such heights of love.
We cannot tell what blessed forces move,
And so transform the careless girlish heart
To bear so high a part.
We cannot tell; we can but praise.

Fair motherhood, by every childish tongue
Thy eulogy is sung.
In every passing age
The theme of seer and sage:
The painters saw thee in a life-long dream;
The painters who have left a world more fair
Than ever days of nymph and goddess were—
Blest company, who now for centuries
Have fixed the virgin mother for our eyes—
The painters saw thee sitting brown or fair,
Under the Tuscan vines or colder Northern air;
They saw pure love transform thy peasant gaze;
They saw thy reverent eyes, thy young amaze
And left thee Queen of Heaven, wearing a crown
Of glory; and abased at thy sweet breast,
Spurning his robes of kingship down,
The God-child laid at rest.

They found thee, and they fixed thee for our eyes;
But every day that goes

Before the gazer new Madonnas rise.
What matter if the cheek show not the rose,
Nor look divine is there nor queenly grace?
The mother's glory lights the homely face.
In every land beneath the circling sun
Thy praise is never done.
Whatever men may doubt, they put their trust in thee;
Rude souls and coarse, to whom virginity
Seems a dead thing and cold.
So always was it from the days of old;
So shall it be while yet our race doth last;
Though truth be sought no more and faith be past,
Still, till all hope of heaven be dead,
Thy praises shall be said.

Aye, thou art ours, or wert, ere yet
The loss we ne'er forget,
The loss which comes to all who reach life's middle way
We see thee by the childish bed
Sit patient all night long,
To cool the parching lips or throbbing head;
We hear thee still with simple song
Or sweet hymn lull the wakeful eyes to sleep;
Through every turning of life's chequered page,
Joying with those who joy, weeping with those who weep.
Oh, sainted love! oh,' precious sacrifice!
Oh, heaven-lighted eyes!
Best dream of early youth, best memory of age!

III. LABOUR.

They do the Maker wrong
Who with the closing days of youth
Shut fast the gate of Song;
Nor ever shall I hold it truth,
With those who feign to tell the tale of life,
That only love is worth, the love that binds
A youth and maid, nor care at all
For the long summer ere the fruit shall fall,
And deem unfit for song the glorious strife,
The joy of toil and thought, the clash of vigorous minds,
When knowledge flies before and we pursue,
And who the Fair once followed, follow now the True.

Ah, full fair life! if something we have lost,
If never more again
We feel the ancient joy, the former pain,
If no more passion-tost
Upon the tides of life we hurry by,
The white waves laughing as we plunge along,
Nor watch the light clouds drift along the sky,
While the glad South snatches us swift and strong
To some blest isle beyond the purple wave,
Where Love is Queen and Mirth, nor Prudence grave
Nor Wisdom frowns, but to be glad is all,
From jocund morn till dewy evening fall;
Oh, if that sky is dark—those winds are still—

Another day has risen: again from the East
Our treasure is increased;
To nd as the orient Lord begins to grow,
few airs begin to blow;
Ou nd on the calm majestic tide,
S Our full-sailed galleon comes to glide,
O ove, with its little skiff, has gone,
But Life's great bark sails on.
A

Toil is the law of life, and its best fruit:
This from the uncaring brute
Divides;—this and the prescient mind whose store
Grows daily more and more.
Toil is the mother of wealth,
The nurse of health;
Toil 'tis that gives the zest
To well-earned rest;
The law of life laid broad and deep
As are the fixed foundations of the sea,
The medicine of grief, the remedy,
Wherefrom Life giveth his beloved sleep.

Oh, labour truly blest!
Thou rulest all the race;
Over all the toiling earth I see thy gracious face
Stand forth confest.
Wherever thou art least,
In those fair lands beneath the tropic blaze,
The slothful savage, likened to the beast,
Drags on his soulless length of days;
Where most thou art,
Man rises upward to a loftier height,
And views the earth and heaven with clearer sight,
And holds a cleaner heart.

I see the toilers with the awaking morn,
Ere yet the day is born,
Go forth to labour over all the earth.
In northern darkness, 'midst the wintry rain,
The great bell clangs thro' the smoke-laden air;
And ere light comes the workers gather there,
While the great engines throb, the swift wheels turn,
And the long, sickly gaslights flare and burn;
I hear the slow winch creak above the pit,
While the black workers, who have toiled all night,
Rise, dazed, to rest and light;
I see the fisher on the waking sea;
The great ship, full-manned, heaving silently
Across the foam; reapers in yellow corn;
The frosty shepherd in the early morn;
The naked worker bent among the cane
Or cotton; the vinedresser, lean and brown;
The thousand labours of the busy town;
The myriad trades which in each clime and race
Build up man's dwelling-place;
I see the countless toiling multitude;
And all I see is good.

But to ends nobler still
The nobler workers of the world are bent.
It is not best in an inglorious ease
To sink and dull content,
When wild revolts and hopeless miseries
The unquiet nations fill;

It is not best to rot
In dull observance, while the bitter cry
Of weak and friendless sufferers rends the sky,
Wailing their hopeless lot;
Or rest in coward fear on former gain,
Making old joys supply the present pain.

Nay, best it is indeed
To spend ourselves upon the general good;
And, oft misunderstood,
To strive to lift the knees and limbs that bleed;—
This is the best, the fullest meed.
Let ignorance assail or hatred sneer;
Who loves his race he shall not fear;
He suffers not for long,
Who doth his soul possess in loving, and grows strong.

Oh, student! far into the night
From youth to age
Bent low upon the blinding page,
Content to catch some gleam of light;
Art thou not happy, though the world pass by?—
Happy though Honours seek thee not, nor Fame,
And no man knows thy name?—
Happy in that blest company of old
Whose names are writ in characters of gold
Upon the rocks of Time, the glorious band
Who on the shining mountains stand,
Thinker and jurist, bard or seer,
Whatever name is brightest and most dear?

Or thou with docile hand,
Obedient to the visionary eye,
Who 'midst art's precious work dost choose to stand
Amid the great ones of the days gone by.
Oh, blest and glorious lot, always to be
With dreams of beauty compassed round about!
The godlike mother and the child divine,
Or land or sea or sky, in calm or storm,
Nature's sincerest verities of form—
To see from canvas or from marble shine,
Little by little orbing gradually,
Some trace of hidden Godhead gleaming out!

Or who, from heart and brain inspired, create,
Defying time, defying fate,
Some deathless theme and high,
Some verse which cannot die,
Some lesson which shall still be said
Altho' their tongue be lost and dead;
Or who, in daily labour's trivial round,
Their fitting work have found;
Or who on high, guiding the car of State,
Are set, a people's envy and their pride,
Who, spurning rank and ease and wealth,
And setting pleasure aside and health,
And meeting contumely oft and hate,
Have lived laborious lives and all too early died.

Or shall I silence keep
Of you, oh ministering women fair,
Who, while the world lies sunk in careless sleep,
Still for the love of God and man can bear

To watch by alien sick-beds, and to guard
With little hope and scant reward,
Midst misery and foul infected air,
The friendless and the dying? Shall I dare
To sing of labour's meed, nor hold you dear?
Dear souls, your joys are great, and yet not wholly here;
In heaven they blossom best and grow complete,
And beautiful upon the eternal mountains are your feet.

Ay, labour, thou art blest.
From all the earth, thy voice, a constant prayer,
Soars upward day and night:
A voice of aspiration after right;
A voice of effort yearning for its rest;
A voice of high hope conquering despair!

IV. REST.

There is a joy in rest;
There is a joy to cease and to be still.
This is the remedy of all the best,
To cure the pain of too laborious will.
Ah! it is sweet to lie reclined,
Reaping the fallow mind,
When all the sweat and drouth of day is done,
And a cool breeze breathes from the setting sun.

The toiler sits before his cottage door,
Set with musk-roses round, and eglantine,
In dewy, scented, twilight-glooms divine,
When all the trouble of the week is o'er,
And sabbath rest comes with the evening sun:
The joyous shouts come up from pool or green;
Round the white chestnut-spikes the beetles hum;
And down the hawthorn-haunted byways come
The loitering lovers, hardly seen
Till springs aloft the clear, large moon
Of pleasant June.

Or by the palm-thatched hut at shut of eve,
The dusky toilers lie, when the red sun
Is sinking or has gone.
A cool wind rises landward from the sea;
The fire-flies glance like silver in the palm;
On the fringed shore the thundering rollers heave;
And all the simple souls are full of glee,
And the fair earth of calm.

Or on the hot and trackless sand,
In the sweet dying day,
Beyond the unknown monuments of the dead,
The last muezzin calls, the prayers are said,
And turbaned faces stern relax a while
To some unwonted smile,
Watching the large-eyed children at their play.

Or maybe busy brains, which day by day
Life's struggle frets away,
Weary with fierce pursuit of fame or wealth,
And prizing only health;
Over the joyous wave in some swift boat,
White-winged, delight to float
From land to land upon the tideless sea;
Borne careless still and free

By hoary cape and gleaming southern
town,
And many an islet clothed with palm
and vine,
And on the wine-dark sea-depths look-
ing down,
High based on wave-worn fronts, the
marble shrine;
Or see the white town flush with dying
day,
And the red mountain fire the glimmer-
ing bay.

Or maybe on the icy hill they creep
Above the pines, across the frozen sea,
Whose blue abysses bare the unfathomed
deep;
Each to the other bound, and silently,
Fearful lest some chance step or spoken
word,
The avalanche trembling downward
may have stirred;
And up the giddy height
Little by little, gaining slow,
They gradually go,
Till with hard toil of knee and hand,
On the white summit panting but con-
tent,
With full hearts throbbing high and
forces spent,
At last the climbers stand;
For this of old is sure,
That change of toil is toil's sufficient cure.

Or by the lovely classic shore,
The traveller sees with wondering eyes
The treasure-house of art; the store
Of gracious memories
Left by some cunning vanished hand,
At whose supreme command
The spirit of beauty rose and did appear:
The angel with the lily; the poor maid,
Submissive, yet afraid;
The fair Madonnas mild;
The deep ineffable Child;
The sweet boy-angels singing high and
clear;
The lady with the mystic smile;
The kneeling Magi from the fabled East;
The blessed Presence at the sacred feast;
And many a virgin martyr sweet,
And many a youthful saint,
Gazing from heavenly eyes and free of
guile;
Who, when the tortured life began to
faint,
Looking in agony above,
Saw the heavens opened, and the Para-
clete
Descending like a dove.

Or maybe under secular trees
Old when his ancestors were young,
The statesman, in the golden autumn,
sees
New glories for the eloquent tongue,
New triumphs gained against the banded
might
Of selfishness and fear, new struggles
for the right;
And in the falling evening and the sad
Short light of waning days,
Illumes his soul with subtle inward rays,
And grows sedately glad.

These thy refreshments are, oh blest
And necessary Rest!
Peaceful delights, which bear not soil
and fret
As do the victories of toil, and yet
Bear their own fruit exceeding fair:
Renewal of the labouring mind,
New hopes, new dawns, and carking
care
A black night left behind.

THE ODE OF GOOD.

ETERNAL Spring, and Source
Of happiness and weal!
Indwelling and unfailing Force!
Who dost Thyself reveal
In every jocund day, and restful night;
In every dawn serenely bright;
In every tide of yearning which doth roll,
Heavenward, some growing soul!

What were life save for Thee
But pain and misery—
To have no more longing, but to be
Below the brute, below the tree,
Below the little stone, or speck of dust,
Which are themselves, and are made just,
Conforming to the law which bade them grow,
Not dreaming dreams of heaven in their estate so low!

The calm brutes live and are,
Tranquil and unafraid,
Keeping their nature only; the faint star
Pursues its orbit always though of Thee
It knows not, yet its vast periphery
Is ordered by Thy hand; by Thee were laid
The fixed foundations of the unfathomed sea;—
All these obey Thee, though they may not know
What law it is that holds them. Man alone
Sees Thee, and knowing Thee, averts his face,
And yet is higher than all for his disgrace,
Which were impossible to brute, or tree, or stone.

How shall a finite voice
Praise Thee who art too high for any praise,
Great Scheme, that by eternal, perfect ways
Farest and dost rejoice!
Thou wert before Life was, or Ill.
Thou rulest all things still;
The Governance and Regimen are Thine,
Oh Plenitude divine!
Of all the countless orbs that roll
Through all Thy infinite space.
We are through Thee alone, each in its place,
Organic, Inorganic, great and small;
Thou dost inspire and keep us all;—
Earth, sky, and sea; herb, tree, insect, and brute;
All Thy created excellences mute,
To Man of large discourse, and the undying soul.

We know not by what Name our tongues shall call
Thee or Thy Essence, nor can Thought as yet
Gain those ineffable heights where Thou art set,
As from a watch-tower guarding all.
Thou girdest Thyself round with mystery,
As Thy great sun behind an embattled cloud,
Or some wrapt summit, never seen;
Yet Thy veiled presence cheers us on our road.
With eyes bent down too much on earth and bowed,
We toil and do forget
All but our daily labour and its load;
Yet art Thou there the while, felt yet unseen,

Oh universal Good, and Thy great Will
Directs our footsteps still—
Directs them, though they come to stray
From Thy appointed perfect way;
Lights them, though for a while they wander far,
Led by some feeble baleful star,
Which can allure them when the blinding fold
Of mist is on the hill side, and the cold
Clouds which make green our lives, descending, hide
Death's steeps on every side.

We know not what Thou art—
Whether the Word of some all-perfect Will
Inborn and nourished in each human heart,
Some hidden and mysterious good,
Obeyed, not understood;
Or whether the harmonious note
Of some world-symphony divine,
To which the perfect Scheme of things,
Ever advancing perfectly
To high fulfilment, sings.
We know not what Thou art, and yet we love;
We know not where Thou dwell'st, yet still above
We turn our eyes to Thee, knowing Thou wilt take
Our yearnings and wilt treasure them, and make
Our little lives fulfil themselves and Thee:
And in this trust we bear to be.

Oh Light so white and pure,
Oft clouded and yet sure!
Oh inner Radiance of the heart,
That drawest all men, whatsoe'er Thou art!
Spring of the soul, that dost remove
Winter with rays of love,
And dost dispel of Thy far-working might
The clouds of Ill and Night,
For every soul which cometh to the earth;
That beamest on us at our birth,
And paling somewhat in life's grosser day,
Lightest, a pillar of fire, our evening way;
What matter by what Name
We call Thee?—still art Thou the same,
God call we Thee, or Good,—still through the strife
Unchangeable alone, of all our changeful life,
With awe-struck souls we seek Thee, we adore
Thy greatness ever more and more,
We turn to Thee with worship, till at last,
Our journey well-nigh past,
When now our day of Life draws to its end,
Looking, with less of awe and more of love,
To Thy high throne above,
We see no dazzling brightness as of old,
No kingly splendours cold,
But the sweet Presence of a heavenly Friend.

THE ODE OF EVIL.

OH, who shall sing of Life and not of Ill?
The essence of our will
Is fullest liberty to stray,
From out the green and blessed way,

Amid the desert wastes of drought and death.
This is the power that makes us free,
This of our Being is the penalty;
And maybe the Eternal Will,
Clothing itself with form to bid Creation be,
Took to itself some boundary, and awhile,
Self-limited, made vile
And subjected to Law the Majesty
Which all the Universe of Space did fill.

Evil is Life,
The conflict of great laws pervading space;
Evil is strife,
Which keeps the creature in its ordered place.
If any hand divine should e'er withdraw
The fixed coercive potency of Law,
Surely the Universe of things would fade
And cease and be unmade.
Where Law is, there is Good,
And freedom to obey or to transgress;
Else 'twere no Law, but, weaker far and less,
If one created soul might not the thing it would.

Young lives spring up and fade,
Wither and are opprest,
Toil takes the world, and pain,
And all the things that God has made
Travail and groan and fain would be at rest,
And Wrong prevails again.
And we—we lift a hopeless eye
Up to the infinite sky,
Mourning the Ill that is, and shall be yet,
Weak creatures who forget
The very law and root of Life,
That it is sown in pain and nursed in woe and strife.

The evil blight of war
Torments the race from age to age,
And man slays man through all the years that are,
And savage lust and brutal rage
Deform this glorious heritage of earth.
We shudder and grow faint,
Knowing the dim fair dreams of seer and saint
Show thin and little worth.
The young life, rising, sinks in sloughs of sense,
And wanders and is lost.
Alas! for days of young-eyed innocence.
Alas! for the calm hours ere, passion-crost,
The young soul grew, a white flower sweet and pure.
Yet not the less 'tis sure
That not in tranquil zones of endless calm
Grows best the victor's palm,
But blown by circling storms which blot the sky,
Nor fitting were it to the eye
Always to look upon a cloudless sun,—
Grown blind with too much light before the journey done.

The victories of Right
Are born of strife.
There were no Day were there no Night,
Nor, without dying, Life.
There only doth Right triumph, where the Wrong
Is mightiest and most strong;
There were no Good, indeed, were there no Ill.

And when the final victory shall come,
Burst forth, oh Awful Sun, and draw
Creation home.

Not within Time or Space
Lines drawn in opposite ways grow one,
But in some Infinite place
Before the Eternal throne;
There, ways to-day divergent, Right and Wrong,
Approach the nearer that they grow more long.
There at the Eternal feet,
Fused, joined, and grown complete,
The circle rounds itself, the enclosing wall
Of the Universe sinks down, and God is all in all!

THE ODE OF AGE.

THERE is a sweetness in autumnal days,
Which many a lip doth praise;
When the earth, tired a little and grown mute
Of song, and having borne its fruit,
Rests for a little space ere winter come.
It is not sad to turn the face towards home,
Even though it shows the journey nearly done;
It is not sad to mark the westering sun,
Even though we know the imminent night doth come.
Silence there is, indeed, for song,
Twilight for noon;
But for the steadfast soul and strong
Life's autumn is as June.
As June itself, but clearer, calmer far;
Here come no passion-gusts to mar,
No thunder-clouds or rains to beat
To earth the blossoms and the wheat.
No high tumultuous noise
Of youth's self-seeking joys,
But a cold radiance white
As the moon shining on a frosty night.

To-morrow is as yesterday, scant change,
Little of new or strange,
No glamour of false hope to daze,
Nor glory to amaze,
Even the old passionate love of love or child
A temperate affection mild,
And ever the recurring thought
Returning, though unsought:
How strange the Scheme of Things! how brief a span
The little life of man!
And ever as we mark them, fleeter and more fleet,
The days and months and years, gliding with wingèd feet.

And ever as the hair grows grey,
And the eyes dim,
And the lithe form which toiled the live-long day,
The stalwart limb,
Begin to stiffen and grow slow,
A higher joy we know:
To spend the remnant of the waning year,
Ere comes the deadly chill,
In works of mercy, and to cheer
The feet which toil against life's rugged hill;
To have known the trouble and the fret,
To have known it, and to cease

In a pervading peace,
Too calm to suffer pain, too living to forget,
And reaching down a succouring hand
To where the sufferers are,
To lift them to the tranquil heights afar,
Whereon Time's conquerors stand.

And when the fruitful hours are done,
How sweet at set of sun
To gather up the fair laborious day!—
To have struck some blow for right
With tongue or pen;
To have smoothed the path to light
For wandering men;
To have chased some fiend of Ill away;
A little backward to have thrust
The instant powers of Drink and Lust,
To have borne down gaunt Despair,
To have dealt a blow at Care!
How sweet to light again the glow
Of hotter fires than youth's, tho' all the blood runs slow!

Oh! is there any joy,
Of all that come to girl or boy
Or manhood's calmer weal and ease,
To vie with these?
Here is some fitting profit day by day,
Which nought can render less;
Some glorious gain Fate cannot take away,
Nor Time depress.
Oh, brother, fainting on your road!
Poor sister, whom the righteous shun!
There comes for you, ere life and strength be done,
An arm to bear your load.
A feeble body, maybe bent, and old,
But bearing 'midst the chills of age
A deeper glow than youth's; a nobler rage;
A calm heart yet not cold.
A man or woman, weak perhaps, and spent,
To whom pursuit of gold or fame
Is as a fire grown cold, an empty name,
Whom thoughts of Love no more allure,
Who in a self-made nunnery dwell,
A cloistered calm and pure,
A beatific peace greater than tongue can tell.

And sweet it is to take,
With something of the eager haste of youth,
Some fainter glimpse of Truth
For its own sake;
To observe the ways of bee, or plant, or bird;
To trace in Nature the ineffable Word,
Which by the gradual wear of secular time,
Has worked its work sublime;
To have touched, with strenuous gropings dim,
Nature's extremest outward rim;
To have found some weed or shell unknown before;
To advance Thought's infinite march a footpace more;
To make or to declare laws just and sage;
These are the joys of Age.

Or by the evening hearth, in the old chair,
With children's children at our knees,
So like, yet so unlike the little ones of old—
Some little lad with curls of gold,
Some little maid demurely fair,
To sit, girt round with ease,
And feel how sweet it is to live,
Careless what fate may give;
To think, with gentle yearning mind,

Of dear souls who have crossed the Infinite Sea;
To muse with cheerful hope of what shall be
For those we leave behind
When the night comes which knows no earthly morn;
Yet mingled with the young in hopes and fears,
And bringing from the treasure-house of years
Some fair-set counsel long-time worn;
To let the riper days of life,
The tumult and the strife,
Go by, and in their stead
Dwell with the living past, so living, yet so dead:
The mother's kiss upon the sleeper's brow,
The little fish caught from the brook,
The dead child-sister's gentle voice and look,
The school-days and the father's parting hand;
The days so far removed, yet oh! so near,
So full of precious memories dear;
The wonder of flying Time, so hard to understand!

Not in clear eye or ear
Dwells our chief profit here.
We are not as the brutes, who fade and make no sign;
We are sustained where'er we go,
In happiness and woe,
By some indwelling faculty divine,
Which lifts us from the deep
Of failing senses dim, and duller brain,
And wafts us back to youth again;
And as a vision fair dividing sleep,
Pierces the vasts behind, the voids before,
And opens to us an invisible gate,
And sets our winged footsteps, scorning Time and Fate,
At the celestial door.

THE ODE OF DECLINE.

With forces well-nigh spent,
Uneasy or in pain,
Or brought to childish weakness once again,
With bodies shrunk and bent,
We come, if Fate so will, to cold decrepit age.
The book of Life lies open at its latest page.

Only four score of summers, and four score
Of winters, nothing more,
And then 'tis done.
We have spent our fruitful days beneath the sun;
We come to a cold season and a bare,
Where little is sweet or fair.
We, who a few brief years ago,
Would passionately go
Across the fields of life to meet the morn,
We are content, content and not forlorn,
To lie upon our beds, and watch the Day
Which kissed the Eastern peaks, grow gradually grey.

Great Heaven, that Thou hast made our lives so brief
And swiftly spent!
We toil our little day and are content,
Though Time, the thief,
Stands at our side, and smiles his mystic smile.

We joy a little, we grieve a little while;
We gain some little glimpse of Thy great laws,
Rolling in thunder through the voids of space;
We gain to look a moment on Thy face,
Eternal Source and Cause!
And then, the night descending as a cloud,
We walk with aspect bowed,
And turn to earth and see our Life grow dark.
Was it for this the fiery spark
Of Thy Eternal Self, sown on the vast
And infinite abysses of the Past,
Revealed itself and made Creation rise
Before Thy Eternal Mind:
This little span of life, with purblind eyes
That grow completely blind;
This little force of brain,
Holding dim thoughts sublime,
Too weak to withstand the treacheries of Time;
This body bent and bowed in twain,
Soon racked by growing pain,
Which briefer far than is the life of the tree,
Springs as a flower and fades, and then must rot
And perish and be not,
Passing from mystery to mystery?

It is a pain
To move through the old fields,—even though they lie
Before our eyes, we know that never again,
Where once our daily feet were used to pass
Amid the crested grass,
We any more shall wander till we die;
Nor to the old grey church, with the tall spire,
Whose vane the sunsets fire,
Where once a little child, by kind hands led,
Would spell the scant memorials of the dead,—
Never again, or once alone,
When pain and Time are done.

The soaring thoughts of youth
Are dead and cold, the victories of Thought
Are no more prized or sought
By eyes which draw too near the face of Truth.
Whatever fruit or gain
Fate held in store,
To tempt the growing soul or brain,
Allures no more.
It is as the late Autumn, when the fields
Are bare of flower or fruit;
Nor charm nor profit the swept surface yields,
Sullen and mute;
So that a doubting mind might come to hold
The very soul and life were dead and cold.

But who can peer
Into another soul, or tell at all
What hidden energies befall
The aged lingering here?
When all the weary brain
Seems dull, the immeasurable fields of life
Lie open to the memory, and again
They know the youthful joys, the hurry and the strife,
And feel, but gentlier now, the ancient pain.

In the uneasy vigils of the night,
Before the tardy light;
Or, lonely days, when no young lives are by,
There come such long processions of the dead,
The buried lives and hopes of far-off years,
Spent joys and dried-up tears,
That round them stands a blessed company,
Holding high converse, though no word be said,
Till only what is past and gone doth seem
To live, and all the Present is a dream.

So may the wintry earth,
Holding her precious seeds within the ground,
Pause for the coming birth,
When like a trumpet-note the Spring shall sound;
So may the roots which, buried deep
And safe within her sleep,
Whisper as 'twere, within, tales of the sun,—
Whisper of leaf and flower, of bee and bird,—
Till by a sudden glory stirred,
A mystic influence bids them rise,
Bursting the narrow sheath
And cerement of death,
And bloom as lilies again beneath the recovered skies.

THE ODE OF CHANGE.

I HAVE come to the time of the failing of breath;
I have reached the cold threshold of Death!
Death! there is not any Death; only infinite change,
Only a place of life which is novel and strange.
Change! there is naught but change and renewal of strife,
Which make up the infinite changes we sum up in life.
Life! what is life, that it ceases with ceasing of breath?
Death! what were Life without change, but an infinite Death?

As I lie on my bed, and the sun, like a furnace of fire,
Burns amid the old pines in the west, ere the last ray expire,
Can I dream he will rise no more, but a fathomless night
Shall brood o'er Creation for ever, and shut out the light?
It is done, this Day of our Life; but another shall rise,
Day for ever following Day, in the infinite skies,
Day following Day for ever!

Day following day, with the starlit darkness between;
Or, maybe in a world where Dawn comes, ere our sunset has been:
Day following Day for ever!

For ever! though who shall tell in what seeming or where?
In what far-off secret space of God's limitless air?
It matters nothing at all what we are or where set,
If a spark of the Infinite Light can shine on us yet.
Life following Life for ever!

Life following Life for ever! for what if the Sun
Grew chilled, and the Universe cold, and the orbits undone,
And all the great globes should fall back into chaos once more;
They would wake at a glance of the Light, as they wakened before.
There is no Death for ever!

Cease! but how should we cease while God's light shall remain?
He that has lighted Life's flame shall light it again!
What if He take back for a while, as the Sun from the Sea,
Some spark of the radiance divine that bade all things to be?
We rest in Him, we are sunk, we are folded in Him, but we are;
As the star which draws near to the Sun is obscured, but is still a star.
There is only Change for ever!

Shall I fear that I shall be changed and no more shall be I?—
I who know not what 'tis that I am, to live or to die?
Nay, while God is, I too must be, else too weak were His hand;
The created is part of His essence,—how else could the Maker stand?
There is no Death for ever!

Take me, oh infinite Cause, and cleanse me of wrong!
Take me, raise me to higher Being through centuries long!
Cleanse me, by pain, if need be, through æons of days!
Take me and purge me, still I will answer with praise—
There is no Death for ever!

Shall I mourn for those who are not
Nay, while love and regret
Still linger within our souls, they live with us yet.
If we love, then the souls that we love, they exist and they are,
As memory which makes us ourselves, brings precious things from far.
Love lives and is for ever!

We are part of an Infinite Scheme,
All we that are;
Man the high crest and crown of things that be,
The fiery-hearted earth, the cold unfathomed sea,
The central sun, the intermittent star.
Things great and small,
We are but parts of the Eternal All;
We live not in a barren, baseless dream;
No endless, ineffectual chain
Of chance successions launched in vain;
But every beat of Time,
Each sun that shines or fails to shine,
Each animate life that comes to throb or cease,
Each life of herb or tree
Which blooms and fruits and then forgets to be,
Each change of strife and peace,
Each soaring thought sublime,
Each deed of wrong and blood,
Each impulse towards an unattained good,—
All with a sure, unfaltering working tend
To one Ineffable, Beatific End.
Oh hidden Scheme, perfect Thyself, and take
Our petty lives, and mould them as Thou wilt!

All things that are, are only for Thy sake,
And not to obey Thee is our only guilt!
Perfect Thyself, and be fulfilled, oh great
Unfathomable Will, who art our Life and Fate!

There is hope, but nothing of fear,
Nought but a patient mind,
For him who waits with conscience clear
And soul resigned
Whate'er the mystic coming change
Shall bring of new and strange.
He looks back once upon the fields of life,
The good and evil locked in strife,
The happy and the unhappy days,
The Right we always love, the oft-triumphant Wrong;
And all his Being to a secret song
Sings with a mighty and unfaltering voice—
"I have been; Thou hast done all things well; I am glad; I give thanks; I rejoice!"

SONGS UNSUNG.

PICTURES—I.

ABOVE the abysmal undivided deep
A train of glory streaming from afar;
And in the van, to wake the worlds from sleep,
One on whose forehead shines the Morning-Star.

Long-rolling surges of a falling sea,
Smiting the sheer cliffs of an unknown shore;
And by a fanged rock, swaying helplessly
A mast with broken cordage—nothing more.

Three peaks, one loftier, all in virgin white,
Poised high in cloudland when the day is done,
And on the mid-most, far above the night,
The rose-red of the long-departed sun.

A wild girl reeling, helpless, like to fall,
Down a hushed street at dawn in mid-summer;
And one who had clean forgot their past and all,
From a lit palace casement pities her.

A young man, only clothed with youth's first bloom,
In mien and form an angel, not in eye:

Hard by, a fell worm crawling from a tomb,
And one, wide-eyed, who cries, "The Enemy!"

A lake of molten fires which swell and surge
And fall in thunders on the burning verge;
And one a queen rapt, with illumined face,
Who doth defy the Goddess of the place.

Eros beneath a red-cupped tree, asleep,
And 'mid the flowers, and thro' the air above,
Fair boys with silver wings who smiling peep
Upon the languid loosened limbs of love.

A darkling gateway, thronged with entering ghosts,
And a grave janitor, who seems to say:
"Woe, woe to youth, to life, which idly boasts;
I am the End, and mine the appointed Way."

A young Faun making music on a reed,
Deep in a leafy dell in Arcady:
Three girl-nymphs fair, in musing thought take heed
Of the strange youth's mysterious melody.

A flare of lamplight in a shameful place
Full of wild revel and unchecked offence,
And in the midst, one fresh scarce-sullied face,
Within her eyes, a dreadful innocence.

A quire of seraphs, chanting row on row,
With lute and viol and high trumpet notes;
And, above all, their soft young eyes aglow—
Child angels, making laud from full clear throats.

Some, on a cliff at dawn, in agony;
Below, a scaly horror on the sea,
Lashing the leaden surge. Fast-bound, a maid
Waits on the verge, alone, but unafraid.

A poisonous, dead, sad sea-marsh, fringed with pine;
Scarce lit by mouldering churches, old as Time;
Beyond, on high, just touched with wintry rime,
The long chain of the autumnal Apennine.

A god-like Presence, beautiful as Dawn,
Watching, upon an untrodden summit white,

The Earth's last day grow full, and fade in night;
Then, with a sigh, the Presence is withdrawn.

A sheer rock-islet, frowning on the sea
Where no ship sails, nor ever life may be:
Thousands of leagues around, from pole to pole,
The unbounded lonely ocean-currents roll.

Young maids who wander on a flower-lit lawn,
In springtide of their lives as of the year;
Meanwhile, unnoticed, swift, a thing of fear,
Across the sun, a deadly shadow drawn.

Slow, hopeless, overborne, without a word,
Two issuing, as if from Paradise;
Behind them, stern, and with unpitying eyes,
Their former selves, wielding a two-edged sword.

A weary woman tricked with gold and gem,
Wearing some strange barbaric diadem,
Scorn on her lips, and, like a hidden fire,
Within her eyes cruel unslaked desire.

Two aged figures, poor, and blurred with tears;
Their child, a bold proud woman, sweeping by;
A hard cold face, which pities not nor fears,
And all contempt and evil in her eye.

Around a harpsichord, a blue-eyed throng
Of long-dead children, rapt in sounds devout,
In some old grange, while on that silent song
The sabbath twilight fades, and stars come out.

The end of things created; Dreadful night,
Advancing swift on sky, and earth, and sea;
But at the zenith a departing light,
A soaring countless blessed company!

THE LESSON OF TIME.

LEAD thou me, Spirit of the World, and I
Will follow where thou leadest, willingly;
Not with the careless sceptic's idle mood,
Nor blindly seeking some unreal good;

For I have come, long since to that full day
Whose morning mists have fled and curled away—

That breathless afternoon-tide when the Sun
Halts, as it were, before his journey done,

Calm as a river broadening toward the main,
Which never plunges down the rocks again,
But, clearly mirrored in its tranquil deep,
Holds tower and spire and forest as in sleep.

How old and worn the metaphor appears,
Old as the tale of passing hopes and fears!
New as the springtide air, which day by day
Breathes on young lives, and speeds them on their way.

The Roman knew it, and the Hellene too;
Assyrian and Egyptian proved it true;
Who found for youth's young glory and its glow
Serener life, and calmer tides run slow.

And them oblivion takes, and those before,
Whose very name and race we know no more,
To whom, oh Spirit of the World and Man,
Thou didst reveal Thyself when Time began,—

They felt, as I, what none may understand;
They touched through darkness on a hidden hand;
They marked their hopes, their faiths, their longings fade,
And found a solitude themselves had made;

They came, as I, to hope which conquers doubt,
Though sun and moon and every star go out;
They ceased, while at their side a still voice said,
"Fear not, have courage; blessed are the dead."

They were my brothers—of one blood with me,
As with the unborn myriads who shall be:
I am content to rise and fall as they;
I watch the dawning of the Perfect Day.

Lead thou me, Spirit, willing and content
To be, if thou wouldst have me, wholly spent.
I am thine own, I neither strive nor cry:
Stretch forth thy hand, I grasp it, silently.

VENDREDI SAINT.

THIS is Paris, the beautiful city,
Heaven's gate to the rich, to the poor without pity.
The clear sun shines on the fair town's graces,
And on the cold green of the shrunken river,
And the chill East blows, as 'twould blow for ever,
On the holiday groups with their shining faces.

For this is the one solemn day of the season,
When all the swift march of her gay unreason
Pauses a while, and a thin veil of sadness
Half hides, from strange eyes, the old riot and madness,
And the churches are crowded with devotees holy,
Rich and poor, saint and sinner, the great and the lowly.

* * * *

Here is a roofless palace, where gape
Black casements in rows without form or shape:
A sordid ruin, whose swift decay
Speaks of that terrible morning in May
When the whole fair city was blood and fire,
And the black smoke of ruin rose higher and higher,

And through the still streets, 'neath the broad Spring sun,
Everywhere murder and rapine were done;
Women lurking, with torch in hand,
Evil eyed, sullen, who soon should stand
Before the sharp bayonets, dripping with blood,
And be stabbed through and through, or shot dead where they stood.

* * * *

This is the brand-new Hôtel de Ville,
Where six hundred wretches met death in the fire;
Ringed round with a pitiless hedge of steel,
Not one might escape that swift vengeance. To-day
The ruin, the carnage, are clean swept away;
And the sumptuous façades, and the high roofs aspire,

And, upon the broad square, the white palace face
Looks down with a placid and meaningless grace,
Ignoring the bloodshed, the struggle, the sorrow,
The doom that has been, and that may be to-morrow,
The hidden hatred, the mad endeavour,
The strife that still is and shall be for ever.

* * * *

Here rise the twin-towers of Notre Dame,
Through siege, and revolt, and ruin the same.
See the people in crowds pressing onward, slowly,
Along the dark aisles to the altar holy—
The altar, to-day, wrapt in mourning and gloom,
Since He whom they worship lies dead in the tomb.

There, by a tiny acolyte tended,
A round-cheeked child in his cassock white,
Lies the tortured figure to which are bended
The knees of the passers who gaze on the sight,
And the people fall prostrate, and kiss and mourn
The fair dead limbs which the nails have torn.

And the passionate music comes from the quire,
Full of soft chords of a yearning pity

The mournful voices accordant aspire
To the far-off gates of the Heavenly City;
And the clear, keen alto, soaring high and higher,
Mounts now a surging fountain, now a heavenward fire.

Ay, eighteen centuries after the day,
A world-worn populace kneel and pray,
As they pass by and gaze on the limbs unbroken.
What symbol is this? of what yearnings the token?
What spell this that leads men a part to be
Of this old Judæan death-agony?

And I asked, Was it nought but a Nature Divine,
That for lower natures consented to die?
Could a greater than human sacrifice,
Still make the tears spring to the world-worn eye?
One thought only it was that replied, and no other:
This man was our brother.

* * * *

As I pass from the church, in the cold East wind,
Leaving its solemn teachings behind:
Once again, on the verge of the chill blue river,
The blighted buds on the branches shiver;
Here, again, stream the holiday groups, with delight
Gaping in wonder at some new sight.

'Tis an open doorway, squalid and low,
And crowds which ceaselessly come and go,
Careless enough ere they see the sight
Which leaves the gay faces pallid and white:
Something is there which can change their mood,
And check the holiday flow of the blood.

For the face which they see is the face of Death.
Strange, such a thing as the ceasing of breath
Should work such miraculous change as here:
Turn the thing that we love, to a thing of fear;
Transform the sordid, the low, the mean,
To a phantasm, pointing to Depths unseen.

There they lie, the dead, unclaimed and unknown,
Each on his narrow and sloping stone.
The chill water drips from each to the ground;
No other movement is there, nor sound.
With the look which they wore when they came to die,
They gaze from blind eyes on the pitiless sky.

No woman to-day, thank Heaven, is here;
But men, old for the most part, and broken quite,
Who, finding this sad world a place of fear,
Have leapt forth hopelessly into the night,
Bankrupt of faith, without love, unfriended,
Dead-tired of life's comedy ere 'twas ended.

But here is one younger, whose ashy face
Bears some faint shadow of former grace.
What brought him here? was it love's sharp fever?
Was she worse than dead that he bore to leave her?
Or was his young life, ere its summer came,
Burnt by Passion's whirlwinds as by a flame.

Was it Drink or Desire, or the die's sure shame,
Which led this poor wanderer to deep disgrace?
Was it hopeless misfortune, unmixed with blame,
That laid him here dead, in this dreadful place?
Ah Heaven, of these nineteen long centuries,
Is the sole fruit this thing with the sightless eyes!

Yesterday, passion and struggle and strife,
Hatreds, it may be, and anger-choked breath;
Yesterday, fear and the burden of life;
To-day, the cold ease and the calmness of death:
And that which strove and sinned and yielded there,
To-day in what hidden place of God's mysterious air?

Whatever he has been, here now he lies,
Facing the stare of unpitying eyes.
I turn from the dank and dishonoured face,
To the fair dead Christ by his altar place,
And the same thought replies to my soul, and no other—
This, too, was our brother.

"NO MORE, NO MORE."

"No more, no more," the autumnal shadows cry;
"No more, no more," our failing hearts reply:
Oh! that our lives were come to that calm shore
Where change is done, and fading is no more.

But should some mightier hand completion send,
And smooth life's stream unrippled to its end,
Our sated souls, filled with an aching pain,
Would yearn for fleeting days and years again.

Thrice blessèd be the salutary change
Which day by day brings thoughts and feelings strange!
Our gain is loss, we keep but what we give,
And only daily dying may we live.

THE NEW CREED.

YESTERDAY, to a girl I said—
"I take no pity on the unworthy dead,
The wicked, the unjust, the vile who die;
'Twere better thus that they should rot and lie.

The sweet, the lovable, the just
Make holy dust;
Elsewhere than on the earth
Shall come their second birth.
Until they go each to his destined place,
Whether it be to bliss or to disgrace,
'Tis well that both shall rest, and for a while be dead."
"There is nowhere else," she said.

"There is nowhere else." And this was a girl's voice
Who, some short tale of summers gone to-day,
Would carelessly rejoice,
As life's blithe springtide passed upon its way
And all youth's infinite hope and bloom
Shone round her; nor might any shadow of gloom
Fall on her as she passed from flower to flower;
Love sought her, with full dower
Of happy wedlock and young lives to rear;
Nor shed her eyes a tear,
Save for some passing pity, fancy-bred.
All good things were around her—riches, love,
All that the heart and mind can move,
The precious things of art, the undefiled
And innocent affection of a child.
Oh girl, who always sunny ways dost tread,
What curse is this that blights that comely head?
For right or wrong there is no further place than here,
No sanctities of hope, no chastening fear?
"There is nowhere else," she said.

"There is nowhere else," and in the wintry ground
When we have laid the darlings of our love—
The little lad with eyes of blue,
The little maid with curls of gold,
Or the belovèd agèd face
On which each passing year stamps a diviner grace—
That is the end of all, the narrow bound.
Why look our eyes above
To an unreal home which mortal never knew—
Fold the hands on the breast, the clay-cold fingers fold?
No waking comes there to the uncaring dead!
"There is nowhere else," she said.

Strange; is it old or new, this deep distress?
Or do the generations, as they press
Onward for ever, onward still,
Finding no truth to fill
Their starving yearning souls, from year to year
Feign some new form of fear
To fright them, some new terror
Couched on the path of error,
Some cold and desolate word which, like a blow,
Forbids the current of their faith to flow,
Makes slow their pulse's eager beat,
And, chilling all their wonted heat,
Leaves them to darkling thoughts and dreads a prey,
Uncheered by dawning shaft or setting ray?

Ah, old it is, indeed, and nowise new.
This is the poison-growth that grew

In the old thinkers' fancy-haunted ground.
They, blinded by some keen too-vivid gleam
Of the Unseen, to which all things did seem
To shape themselves and tend,
Solved, by some Giant Force, the Mystery of Things,
And, soaring all too high on Fancy's wings,
Saw in dead matter both their Source and End.
They felt the self-same shock and pain
As I who hear these prattlings cold to-day.
Not otherwise of old the fool to his heart did say.
"There is no other place of joy or grief,
Nor wrong in doubt, nor merit in belief:
There is no God, nor Lord of quick and dead;
There is nowhere else," they said.

And, indeed, if any to whom life's path were rough
Should say as you, he had cause maybe at sight.
Truly, the way is steep and hard enough,
And wrong is tangled and confused with right;
And from all the world there goes a solemn sound
Of lamentations, rising from the ground,
Confused as that which shocks the wondering ear
Of one who, gliding on the still lagune,
Finds the oar's liquid plash and tune
Lost in wild cries of frenzy and of fear,
And knows the Isle of Madness drawing near;
And the great scheme, if scheme there be indeed,
Is a book deeper than our eyes may read,
Full of wild paradox, and vain endeavour,
And hopes and faiths which find completion never.
For such a one, in seasons of dismay
And dark depression deepening to despair,
Clouds come ofttimes to veil the face of day,
And there is no ray left of all the beams of gold,
The glow, the radiance bright, the unclouded faith of old.

But you, poor child forlorn,
Ah! better were it you were never born:
Better that you had flung your heart away
On some coarse lump of clay;
Better defeat, disgrace, childlessness, all
That can a solitary life befall,
Than to have all things and yet be
Self-bound to dark despondency,
And self-tormented, beyond reach of doubt,
By some cold word that puts all yearnings out.

"There is nowhere else," she said:
This is the outcome of their crude Belief
Who are, beyond all rescue and relief,
Being self-slain and numbered with the dead.
"There is no God but Force,
Which, working always on its destined course,
Speeds on its way and knows no thought of change.

Within the germ the molecule fares free,
Holding the potency of what shall be;
Within the little germ lurks the heaven-reaching tree:
No break is there in all the cosmic show.
What place is there, in all the Scheme Immense,
For a remote unworking Excellence
Which may not be perceived by any sense,
Which makes no humble blade of grass to grow,
Which adds no single link to things and thoughts we know?"

"For everything that is, indeed,
Bears with it its own seed;
It cannot change or cease and be no more:
All things for ever are even as they were before,
Or if, by long degrees and slow,
More complex doth the organism grow,
It makes no break in the eternal plan;
There is no gulf that yawns between the herb and man."

Poor child, what is it they have taught,
Who through deep glooms and desert wastes of thought
Have brought to such as you their dreary creed?
Have they no care, indeed,
For all the glorious gains of man's long past,
For all our higher hope of what shall be at last?
"All things are moulded in one mould;
They spring, they are, they fade by one compulsion cold—
Some dark necessity we cannot know,
Which bids them wax and grow,—
That is sufficient cause for all things, quick and dead!"
"There is no Cause else," she said.

Oh, poor indeed, and in evil case,
Who shouldst be far from sound of doubt
As a maiden in some restful place
Whose tranquil life, year in year out,
Is built on gentle worship, homely days
Lit each by its own light of prayer and praise,
For whom the spire points always to the sky,
And heaven lies open to the cloistered eye.
For us, for us, who mid the weary strife
And jangling discords of our life
Are day by day opprest,
'Twere little wonder were our souls distrest,
God, and the life to be, and all our early trust
Being far from us expelled and thrust;
But for you, child, who cannot know at all
To what mysterious laws we stand or fall,
To what bad heights the wrong within may grow,
To what dark deeps the stream of hopeless lives may flow!

For let the doubter cavil as he can,
There is no wit in man
Which can make Force rise higher still
Up to the heights of Will,—
No phase of Force which finite minds can know
Can self-determined grow,
And of itself elect what shall its essence be:
The same to all eternity,

Unchanged, unshaped, it goes upon its blinded way;
Nor can all forces nor all laws
Bring ceasing to the scheme, nor any pause,
Nor shape it to the mould in which to be—
Form from the wingèd seed the myriad-branching tree,—
Nor guide the force once sped, so that it turn
To Water-floods that quench or Fires that burn,
Or now to the electric current change,
Or draw all things by some attraction strange.
Or in the brain of man, working unseen, sublime,
Transcend the narrow bounds of Space and Time.

Whence comes the innate Power which knows to guide
The force deflected so from side to side,
That not a barren line from whence to where
It goes upon its way through the unfettered air?
What launched the prisoned atom on its fruitful course?
Ah, it was more than Force
Which gave the Universe of things its form and face!
Force moving on its path through Time and Space
Would round no orb, but leave all barren still.
A higher Power, it was, the worlds could form and fill;
And by some pre-existent harmony
Were all things made as Fate would have them be—
Fate, the ineffable Word of an Eternal Will.

All things that are or seem,
Whether we wake who see or do but dream,
Are of that Primal Will phantasms, if no more;
Who sees these right sees God, and seeing doth adore.
Joy, suffering, evil, good,
Whate'er our daily food,
Whate'er the mystery and paradox of things,
Low creeping thoughts and high imaginings.
The laughters of the world, the age-long groan,
Bring to his mind one name, one thought alone;
All beauty, right, deformity, or wrong,
Sing to his ear one high unchanging song:
And everything that is, to his rapt fancy brings
The hidden beat through space of the Eternal Wings.

Where did the Idea dwell,
At first, which was of all the germ and seed?
Which worked from Discord order, from blind Force
Sped all the Cosmos on its upward course?
Which held within the atom and the cell
The whole vast hidden Universe, sheltered well,
Till the hour came to unfold it, and the need?
What did the ever-upward growth conceive,
Which from the obedient monad formed the herb, the tree,
The animal, the man, the high growths that shall be?

Ever from simpler to more complex grown,
The long processions from a source unknown
Unfold themselves across the scene of life.
Oh blessed struggle and strife,
Fare onward to the end, since from a Source
Thou art, which doth transcend and doth determine Force!
Fare onward to the end; not from Force, dead and blind
Thou comest, but from the depths of the Creative Mind.

Fare on to the end, but how should ending be,
If Will be in the Universe, and plan?
Some higher thing shall be, that which to-day is Man.
Undying is each cosmic force:
Undying, but transformed, it runs its endless course.
It cannot wane, or sink, or be no more.
Not even the dust and lime which clothe us round
Lose their own substance in the charnel-ground,
Or carried far upon the weltering wind;
Only with other growths combined,
In some new whole they are for ever—
They are, and perish never.
The great suns shed themselves in heat and light
On the vast vacant interstellar air,
Till when their scattered elements unite
They are replenished as before they were.
Nothing is lost, nor can be: change alone,
Unceasing, never done,
Shapes all the forms of things, and keeps them still
Obedient to the Unknown Perfect Will.
And shall the life that is the highest that we know,
Shall this, alone, no more increase, expand and grow?

Nay, somewhere else there is, although we know not where,
Nor what new shape God gives our lives to wear.
We are content, whatever it shall be;
Content, through all eternity,
To be whatever the Spirit of the World deem best;—
Content to be at rest;
Content to work and fare through endless days;
Content to spend ourselves in endless praise:
Nay, if it be the Will Divine,
Content to be, and through long lives to pine,
Far from the light which vivifies, the fire
Which breathes upon our being and doth inspire
All soaring thoughts and hopes which light our pathway here;
Content, though with some natural thrill of fear,
To be purged through by age-long pain,
Till we resume our upward march again;
Content, at need, to take some lower form,
Some humbler herb or worm
To be awhile, if e'er the eternal plan
Go back from higher to lower, from man to less than man.

Not so, indeed, we hold, but rather this—
That all Time gone, that all that was or is,
The scarpèd cliff, the illimitable Past,
This truth alone of all truths else hold fast:—
From lower to higher, from simple to complete,
This is the pathway of the Eternal Feet;
From earth to lichen, herb to flowering tree,
From cell to creeping worm, from man to what shall be.
This is the solemn lesson of all time,
This is the teaching of the voice sublime:
Eternal are the worlds, and all that them do fill;
Eternal is the march of the Creative Will;
Eternal is the life of man, and sun, and star;
Ay, even though they fade a while, they are;
And though they pause from shining, speed for ever still.

A GREAT GULF.

If any tender sire
Who sits girt round by loving faces
And happy childhood's thousand graces,
Through sudden crash or fire
Should 'scape from this poor life to some mysterious air,
And, dwelling solitary there,
Feel his unfilled and yearning father's heart
Pierced through by some intolerable smart;
And, sickening for the dear lost lives again,
Through his o'ermastering pain
Should break the awful bounds the Eternal sets between
That which lives Here, and There, the Seen and the Unseen;

And having gained once more
This little Earth, should reach the scarce-left place
Which greets him with unchanged familiar face—
The well-remembered door,
The rose he watered blooming yet,
Nought to remember or forget,
No change in all the world except in him,
Nor there save in some sense already dim
Before the unaltered past, so that he seem
A mortal spirit still, and what was since, a dream;

And in the well-known room
Finds all the blithe remembered faces
Grown sad and blurred by recent traces
Of a new sorrow and gloom,
And when his soul to comfort them is fain
Mourns his voice mute, his form unknown, unseen,
And thinks with irrepressible pain
Of all the happy days which late have been,
And feels his new life's inmost chambers stirred
If only of his own, he might be seen or heard;

Then if, at length,
The father's yearning and o'erburdened soul

Burst into shape and voice which scorn control
Of its despairing strength,—
Ah Heaven! ah pity for the present dread
Which rising, strikes the old affection dead!
Ah, better were it far than this thing to remain,
Voiceless, unseen, unloved, for ever and in pain!

So when a finer mind,
Knowing its old self swept by some weird change
And the old thought deceased, or else grown strange,
Turns to those left behind,
With passionate stress and mighty yearning stirred,—
It strives to stand revealed in shape and word
In vain; or by strong travail visible grown,
Finds but a world estranged, and lives and dies alone!

ONE DAY.

ONE day, one day, our lives shall seem
Thin as a brief forgotten dream:
One day, our souls by life oppress,
Shall ask no other boon than rest.

And shall no hope nor longing come,
No memory of our former home,
No yearning for the loved, the dear
Dead lives that are no longer here?

If this be age, and age no more
Recall the hopes, the fears of yore,
The dear dead mother's accents mild,
The lisping of the little child,
Come, Death, and slay us ere the blood
Run slow, and turn our lives from good;
For only in such memories we
Consent to linger and to be.

SEASONS.

THE colds winds rave on the icy river,
The leafless branches complain and shiver,
The snow clouds sweep on, to a dreary tune,—
Can these be the earth and the heavens of June?—

When the blossoming trees gleam in virginal white,
And heaven's gate opens wide in the lucid night,
And there comes no sound on the perfumed air
But the passionate brown bird, carolling fair,

And the lush grass in upland and low-land stands deep,
And the loud landrail lulls the children to sleep,
And the white still road and the thick leaved wood
Are haunted by fanciful solitude;

And by garden and lane men and maidens walk,
Busied with trivial, loverlike talk;
And the white and the red rose, newly blown,
Open, each with a perfume and grace of its own.

The cold wind sweeps o'er the desolate hill,
The stream is bound fast and the wolds are chill;
And by the dead flats, where the cold blasts moan,
A bent body wearily plods alone.

THE PATHOS OF ART.

OFT, seeing the old painters' art,
We find the tear unbidden start,
And feel our full hearts closer grow
To the far days of long ago.

Not burning faith, or godlike pain,
Can thus our careless thought enchain;
The heavenward gaze of souls sublime,
At once transcends, and conquers time.

Nor pictured form of seer or saint,
Which hands inspired delight to paint;
Art's highest aims of hand or tongue,
Age not, but are for ever young.

But some imperfect trivial scene,
Of homely life which once has been,
Of youth, so soon to pass away,
Of happy childhood's briefer day;

Or humble daily tasks portrayed—
The thrifty mistress with her maid;
The flowers, upon the casement set,
Which in our Aprils blossom yet;

The long processions, never done;
The time-worn palace, scarce begun;
The gondolier, who plies his oar
For stately sirs or dames of yore;

The girl with fair hair morning-stirred,
Who swings the casement for her bird;
The hunt; the feast; the simple mirth
Which marks the marriage or the birth;

The burly forms, from side to side
Swift rolling on the frozen tide;
The long-haired knights; the ladies prim;
The chanted madrigal or hymn;

The opera, with its stately throng;
The twilight church aisles stretching long;
The spires upon the wooded wold;
The dead pathetic life of old;—

These all the musing mind can fill—
So dead, so past, yet living still:
Oh dear dead lives, oh hands long gone,
Whose life, whose Art still lingers on!

IN THE STRAND.

IN the midst of the busy and roaring Strand,
Dividing life's current on either hand,
A time-worn city church, sombre and grey,
Waits, while the multitude passes away.

Beside it, a strait plot of churchyard ground
Is fenced by a time-worn railing around;
And within, like a pavement, the ground is spread
With the smooth worn stones of the nameless dead.

But here and there, in the spaces between,
When the slow Spring bursts, and the fields grow green,

Every year that comes, 'mid the graves of the dead
Some large-leaved flower-stem lifts up its head.

In the Spring, though as yet the sharp East be here,
This green stem burgeons forth year by year:
Through twenty swift summers and more, have I seen
This tender shoot rise from its sheath of green.

New busy crowds pass on with hurrying feet,
The young lives grow old and the old pass away;
But unchanged, 'mid the graves, at the fated day,
The green sheath bursts upwards and grows complete.

From the grave it bursts forth, 'mid the graves it shall die,
It shall die as we die, as it lives we shall live;
And this poor flower has stronger assurance to give,
Than volumes of learning, which blunder or lie.

For out of the dust and decay of the tomb,
It springs, the sun calling, to beauty and bloom;
And amid the sad city, 'mid death and 'mid strife,
It preaches its mystical promise of life.

CŒLUM NON ANIMUM.

OH fair to be, oh sweet to be
In fancy's shallop faring free,
With silken sail and fairy mast
To float till all the world be past!

Oh happy fortune, on and on
To wander far till care be gone,
Round beetling capes, to unknown seas,
Seeking the fair Hesperides!

But is there any land or sea
Where toil and trouble cease to be—
Some dim, unfound, diviner shore,
Where men may sin and mourn no more?

Ah, not the feeling, but the sky
We change, however far we fly;
How swift soe'er our bark may speed,
Faster the blessed isles recede.

Nay, best it is at home to find
Food for the labouring heart and mind,
And take, since thus the world grows fair,
Duty and pleasure everywhere.

Oh well-worn road, oh homely way,
Where pace our footsteps, day by day,
The homestead and the church which bound
The tranquil seasons' circling round!

Ye hold experiences which reach
Depths which no change of skies can teach,
The saintly thought, the secret strife
Which guide, which do perturb our life.

NIOBE.

ON SIPYLUS.

AH me, ah me! on this high mountain peak,
Which far above the seething Lydian plains
Takes the first dawn-shaft, and the sunset keeps
When all the fields grow dark—I, Niobe,
A mother's heart, pent in a prison of stone,
Stand all day in the vengeful sun-god's eye,
Stand all night in the cold gaze of the moon,
Who both long ages since conspiring, slew
My children,—I a childless mother now
Who was most blest, a grieving woman still,
Who am bereft of all, yet cannot die.

Ah day, ill-fated day, which wrecked my life!
I was the happy mother of strong sons,
Brave, beautiful, all in their bloom of age:
From him my first-born, now a bearded man,
Through the fair promise of imperfect youth,
To the slim stripling who had scarcely left
The women's chambers, on whose lip scant shade
Of budding manhood showed, I loved them all;
All with their father's eyes, and that strange charm
Of rhythmic grace, and musical utterance
As when, in far-off Thebes, the enchanted wall
Rose perfect, to the music of his lyre.

Ah me, the fatal day! For at high noon
I sate within my Theban palace fair—
Deep summer-time it was—and marked the crowd
From the thronged city street, to the smooth plain,
Stream joyously: the brave youths, full of life,
Stripped for the mimic fray, the leap, the race,
The wrestling; and the princes, my strong sons,
The fair limbs I had borne beneath my zone
Grown to full stature, such as maidens love,—
The sinewy arms, the broad chests, and strong loins
Of manhood; the imperfect flower-like forms,
Eager with youth's first fires; my youngest born,
My darling, doffing his ephebic robe
Which late he donned with pride, a child in heart,
In budding limbs a youth;—I see them go,
Their fair young bodies glistening in the sun,
Which kissed the shining olive. As they went,
The joyous concourse winding towards the plain,
My happy eyes o'erflowed, and as I turned
And saw my daughters round me, fair grown lives

And virgin, sitting spinning the white flax,
Each with her distaff, beautiful and fit
To wed with any stately king of men
And reign a queen in Hellas, my glad heart
Broke forth in pride, and as I looked I thought,
"Oh happy, happy mother of such sons!
Oh happy, happy mother of such girls!
For whom full soon the joyous nuptial rites
Shall bring the expectant bridegroom and the bride,
And soon once more the little childish hands
Which shall renew my early wedded years,
When the king loved me first. Thrice blest indeed.
There is no queen in Hellas such as I,
Dowered with such fair-grown offspring; not a queen
Nor mother o'er all earth's plain, around which flows
The wide salt stream of the encircling sea,
As blest as I. Nay, in Olympus' self
To all-compelling Zeus, what offspring bare
Leto of yore? Phœbus and Artemis,
A goodly pair indeed, but two alone.
Poor mother, that to such a lord as Zeus
Bare only those, no fairer than my own.
Nay, I am happier than a goddess' self;
I would not give this goodly train of mine
For that scant birth. I ask no boon of Zeus,
Nor of the Olympian Gods; for I am glad.
No fruitful mother in a peasant's hut,
Scorning the childless great, thinks scorn of me,
Being such as I. Nay, let Queen Leto's self
Know, that a mortal queen has chanced to bear
As fair as she, and more."
Even as I spoke,
While these unhallowed boastings flushed my pride,
Through the closed lattice pierced one angry shaft
Of blinding sun, which on the opposite wall
Traced some mysterious sign, and on my mind
Such vague remorse and consciousness of ill,
That straight, that arrogant boldness sank and died
In a great dread, nor hardly could I bear
To look upon the fairness of my girls,
Who, seeing the vague trouble in my eyes,
Grew pale, and shuddered for no cause, and gazed
Chilled 'midst the blaze of sunlight.
Then I strove
To laugh my fears away, as one who knows
Some great transgression weigh on him, some load
Which will not be removed, but bears him down,
Though none else knows it, pressing on his heart.

But when the half unuttered thought grew dim
And my fear with it, suddenly a cry

Rose from the city street, and then the sound
Of measured hurrying feet, and looking forth
To where the youth had passed so late, in joy,
Came two who carried tenderly, with tears,
A boy's slight form. I had no need to look,
For all the mother rising in me knew
That 'twas my youngest born they bore; I knew
What fate befell him—'twas the vengeful sun,
And I alone was guilty, I, his mother,
Who being filled with impious pride, had brought
Death to my innocent child. I hurried down
The marble stair and met them as they came,
Bearing his corpse, and kissed his lips and called
His name, yet knew that he was dead; and all
His brothers stood regarding us with tears,
And would have soothed me with their loving words,
Me guilty, who were guiltless, oh, my sons!
Till as I looked up from the dead,—a cry
Of agony,—and then another fell
Struggling for life upon the earth, and then
Another, and another, till the last
Of all my stalwart boys, my life, my pride,
Lay dead upon the ground, and the fierce sun
Frenzied my brain, and all distraught with woe
I to the palace tottered, while they bore
Slowly the comely corpses of my sons.

That day I dare not think of when they lay,
White shrouded, in the darkened palace rooms,
Like sculptured statues on a marble hearse.
How calm they looked and happy, my dear sons!
There was no look of pain within their eyes,
The dear dead eyes which I their mother closed;
Me miserable! I saw the priests approach,
And ministers of death; I saw my girls
Flung weeping on the brothers whom they loved.
I saw it all as in a dream. I know not
How often the dead night woke into day,
How often the hot day-time turned to night.
I did not shudder even to see the Sun
Which slew my sons; but in the still, dead night,
When in that chill and lifeless place of death,
The cold, clear, cruel moonlight seemed to play
Upon the rangèd corpses, and to mock
My mother's heart, and throw on each a hue
Of swift corruption ere its time, I knew
Some secret terror lest the jealous gods
Might find some further dreadful vengeance still,
Taking what yet was left.

At set of sun
The sad procession to the place of graves
Went with the rites of royal sepulture,
The high priest at its head, the nobles round
The dear white shrouded corpses: Last of all
I went, the guilty one, my fair sweet girls
Clinging to me in tears; but I, I shed not
A single tear—grief dried the fount of tears,
I had shed all mine.
Only o'ermastering dread
Held me of what might come.
When they were laid,
Oh, wretched me, my dear, my well-loved sons!
Within the kingly tomb, the dying sun
Had set, and in his stead the rising moon,
Behind some lofty mountain-peak concealed,
Relit some ghostly twilight. As we knelt,
The people all withdrawn a little space,
I and my daughters in that place of death,
I lifted up my suppliant voice, and they
With sweet girl voices pure, and soaring hymn,
To the great Powers above.
But when at last
I heard my hollow voice pleading alone
And all the others silent, then I looked,
And on the tomb the cold malignant moon,
Bursting with pale chill beams of light, revealed
My fair girls kneeling mute and motionless,
Their dead eyes turned to the unpitying orb,
Their white lips which should offer prayer no more.

Such vengeance wreaked Phœbus and Artemis
Upon a too proud mother. But on me
Who only sinned no other punishment
They took, only the innocent lives I loved—
If any punishment, indeed, were more
Than this to one who had welcomed death. I think
My children happier far in death than I
Who live to muse on these things. When my girls
Were laid in earth, I, my lone palace gate
Leaving without a tear, sped hither in haste
To this high rock of Sipylus where erst
My father held his court; and here, long years,
Summer and winter, stay I, day and night
Gazing towards the far-off plain of Thebes,
Wherein I was so happy of old time,
Wherein I erred and suffered. Turned to stone
They thought me, and 'tis true the mother's heart
Which knows such grief as I knew, turns to stone,
And all her life; and pitying Zeus, indeed,
Seeing my suffering, listened to my prayer
And left me seeming stone, but still the heart
Of the mother grows not hard, and year by year

When comes the summer with its cloudless skies,
And the high sun lights hill and plain by day,
And the moon, shining, silvers them by night,
My old grief, rising dew-like to my eyes,
Quickens my life with not unhappy tears,
And through my penitent and yearning heart
There throbs again a pulse of love and grief:
Love triumphing at last o'er Fate and Death,
Grief all divine and vindicating Love.

PICTURES—II.

A LURID sunset, red as blood,
Firing a sombre, haunted wood;
From whose recesses, dark and fell,
One hurries with a face of Hell.

Two at a banquet board alone,
In dalliance, the feast being done.
And one behind the arras stands,
Grasping an axe with quivering hands.

A high cliff-meadow lush with Spring;
Gay butterflies upon the wing;
Beneath, beyond, unbounded, free,
The foam-flecked, blue, pervading sea.

A clustering hill-town, climbing white
From the grey olives up the height,
And higher on the glaring sky
A huge sierra, dead and dry.

A rain-swept moor at shut of day,
And by the dead unhappy way
A lonely child untended lies:
Against the West a wretch who flies.

Cold dawn, which flouts the abandoned hall,
And one worn face, which loathes it all;
In his ringed hand a vial, while
The grey lips wear a ghastly smile.

Corinthian pillars fine, which stand
In moonlight on a desert sand;
Others o'erthrown, in whose dark shade
Some fire-eyed brute its lair has made.

Mountainous clouds embattled high
Around a dark blue lake of sky;
And from its clear depths, shining far,
The calm eye of the evening star.

A moonlight chequered avenue;
Above, a starlit glimpse of blue:
And from the thick-laced shade between
The grey ghost of a woman seen.

A NIGHT IN NAPLES.

THIS is the one night in all the year
When the faithful of Naples who love their priest

May find their faith and their wealth increased;
For just as the stroke of midnight is here,

Those who with faithful undoubting mind
Their "Aves" mutter, their rosaries tell,
They without doubt shall a recompence find;
Yea, their faith indeed shall profit them well.

Therefore, to-night, in the hot thronged street
By San Gennaro's, the people devout,
With banner, and relic, and thurible meet,
With some sacred image to marshal them out.

For a few days hence, the great lottery
Of the sinful city declared will be,
And it may be that Aves and Paters said
Will bring some aid from the realms of the dead.

And so to the terrible place of the tomb
They issue, a pitiful crowd, through the gloom,
To where all the dead of the city decay,
Waiting the trump of the judgment day.

For every day of the circling year
Brings its own sum of corruption here;
Every day has its great pit, fed
With its dreadful heap of the shroudless dead.

And behind a grated rust-eaten door,
Marked each with their fated month and day,
The young and the old, who in life were poor,
Fester together and rot away.

Silence is there, the silence of death,
And in silence those poor pilgrims wearily pace,
And the wretched throng, pitiful, holding its breath,
Comes with shambling steps to the dreadful place.

Till before these dark portals, the muttering crowd
Breaks at length into passionate suffrages loud,
Waiting the flickering vapour thin,
Bred of the dreadful corruption within.

And here is a mother who kneels, not in woe,
By the vault where her child was flung months ago;
And there is a strong man who peers with dry eyes
At the mouth of the gulph where his dead wife lies.

Till at last, to reward them, a faint blue fire,
Like the ghost of a soul, flickers here or there
At the gate of a vault, on the noisome air,
And the wretched throng has its low desire;

And with many a praise of favouring saint,
And curses if any refuses to heed,
Full of low hopes and of sordid greed,
To the town they file backward, weary and faint.

And a few days hence, the great lottery
Of the sinful city declared will be,
And a number thus shewn to those sordid eyes,
May, the saints being willing, attain the prize.

Wherefore to Saint and Madonna be said,
All praise and laud, and the faithful dead!

* * * *

It was long, long ago, in far-off Judæa,
That they slew Him of old, whom these slay to-day;
They slew Him of old, in far-off Judæa,—
It is long, long ago; it was far, far away!

LIFE.

LIKE to a star, or to a fire,
Which ever brighter grown, or higher,
Doth shine forth fixed, or doth aspire;

Or to a glance, or to a sigh;
Or to a low wind whispering by,
Which scarce has risen ere it die;

Or to a bird, whose rapid flight
Eludes the dazed observer's sight,
Or a stray shaft of glancing light,

That for an instant breaks the gloom
Which wraps some dark, forgotten tomb,
Or some sweet Spring-flower's fleeting bloom;—

Mixed part of reason, part belief,
Of pain and pleasure, joy and grief,
As changeful as the Spring, and brief;—

A wave, a shadow, a breath, a strife,
With change on change for ever rife!—
This is the thing we know as life.

CRADLED IN MUSIC.

A BRIGHT young mother, day by day,
I meet upon the crowded way,
Who turns her dark eyes, deep and mild,
Upon her little sleeping child.

For on the organ laid asleep,
In childish slumbers light, yet deep,
Calmly the rosy infant lies;
The long fair lashes veil its eyes.

There, o'er its childish slumbers sweet,
The winged hours steal with noiseless feet;
Far off the music seems to cheer
The child's accustomed drowsy ear.

Hymn tune and song tune, grave and gay,
Comfort him all the joyous day;
And, half remembered, faintly seem
To mingle with his happy dream.

Poor child, for whom the summer long
Our dull days slip by, winged with song;
Sleeping for half the tuneful day,
Waking 'neath loving looks to play;

Whose innocent eyes unconscious see
Nothing but mirth in misery.
Thy mother smiles, thy sister stands
Smiling, the tambour in her hands.

And with the time of hard-earned rest,
'Tis thine to press that kindly breast;

Nor dream of all the toil, the pain,
The weary round begun again,—

The fruitless work, the blow, the curse,
The hunger, the contempt, or worse;
The laws despite, the vague alarms,
Which pass not those protecting arms.

Only, as yet, 'tis thine to know
The bright young faces all aglow,
As down the child-encumbered street
The music stirs the lightsome feet,

Only to crow and smile, as yet.
Soon shall come clouds, and cold, and wet;
And where the green leaves whisper now,
The mad East flinging sleet and snow.

And if to childhood thou shalt come—
Childhood that knows not hearth or home,—
Coarse words maybe, and looks of guile,
Shall chase away that constant smile.

Were it not better, child, than this,
The burden of full life to miss;
And now, while yet the time is May,
Amid the music pass away.

And leave the dissonant cries of wrong
For the immortal, perfect song;
And take the changeless heavenly life
For earth's poor vagrant toil and strife;

And keep, within those opened skies,
A vision of thy mother's eyes;
And hear those old strains, faint and dim,
Grown fine, within the eternal hymn?

Nay, whatsoe'er our thought may deem,
Not that is better which may seem;
'Twere better that thou camest to be,
If Fate so willed, in misery.

What shall be, shall be—that is all;
To one great Will we stand and fall.
"The Scheme hath need"—we ask not why,
And in this faith we live and die.

ODATIS.

AN OLD LOVE-TALE.

CHARES of Mytilené, ages gone,
When the young Alexander's conquering star
Flamed on the wondering world, being indeed
The comrade of his arms, from the far East
Brought back this story of requited love.

A Prince there was of Media, next of blood
To the great King Hystaspes, fair of form
As brave of soul, who to his flower of age
Was come, but never yet had known the dart
Of Cypris, being but a soldier bold,
Too much by trenchèd camps and wars' alarms
Engrossed, to leave a thought for things of love.

Now, at this selfsame time, by Tanais
Omartes ruled, a just and puissant king.

No son was his, only one daughter fair,
Odatis, of whose beauty and whose worth
Fame filled the furthest East. Only as yet,
Of all the suitors for her hand, came none
Who touched her maiden heart; but, fancy free,
She dwelt unwedded, lonely as a star.

Till one fair night in springtide, when the heart
Blossoms as does the earth, Cypris, the Queen,
Seeing that love is sweet for all to taste,
And pitying these loveless parted lives,
Deep in the sacred silence of the night,
From out the ivory gate sent down on them
A happy dream, so that the Prince had sight
Of fair Odatis in her diadem
And habit as she lived, and saw the charm
And treasure of her eyes, and knew her name
And country as it was; while to the maid
There came a like fair vision of the Prince
Leading to fight the embattled Median hosts,
Young, comely, brave, clad in his panoply
And pride of war, so strong, so fair, so true,
That straight, the virgin coldness of her soul
Melted beneath the vision, as the snow
In springtime at the kisses of the sun.

And when they twain awoke to common day
From that blest dream, still on their trancèd eyes
The selfsame vision lingered. He a form
Lovelier than all his life had known, more pure
And precious than all words; she a strong soul
Yet tender, comely with the fire, the force
Of youthful manhood; saw both night and day.

Nor ever from their mutual hearts the form
Of that celestial vision waned nor grew
Faint with the daily stress of common life,
As do our mortal phantasies, but still
He, while the fiery legions clashed and broke,
Saw one sweet face above the flash of spears;
She in high palace pomps, or household tasks,
Or 'mid the glittering courtier-crowded halls
Saw one brave ardent gaze, one manly form.

Now while in dreams of love these lovers lived
Who never met in waking hours, who knew not
Whether with unrequited love they burned, or whether
In mutual yearnings blest; the King Omartes,
Grown anxious for his only girl, and knowing
How blest it is to love, would bid her choose

Whom she would wed, and summoning the maid,
With fatherly counsels pressed on her; but she:
"Father, I am but young; I prithee, ask not
That I should wed; nay, rather let me live
My life within thy house. I cannot wed.
I can love only one, who is the Prince
Of Media, but I know not if indeed
His love is his to give, or if he know
My love for him; only a heavenly vision,
Sent in the sacred silence of the night,
Revealed him to me as I know he is.
Wherefore, my father, though thy will be law,
Have pity on me; let me love my love,
If not with recompense of love, alone;
For I can love none else."
Then the King said:
"Daughter, to me thy happiness is life,
And more; but now, I pray thee, let my words
Sink deep within thy mind. Thou canst not know
If this strange vision through the gate of truth
Came or the gate of error. Oftentimes
The gods send strong delusions to ensnare
Too credulous hearts. Thou canst not know, in sooth,
If 'twas the Prince thou saw'st, or, were it he,
If love be his to give; and if it were,
I could not bear to lose thee, for indeed
I have no son to take my place, or pour
Libations on my tomb, and shouldst thou wed
A stranger, and be exiled from thy home,
What were my life to me? Nay, daughter, dream
No more, but with some chieftain of my realm
Prepare thyself to wed. With the new moon
A solemn banquet will I make, and bid
Whate'er of high descent and generous youth
Our country holds. There shalt thou make thy choice
Of whom thou wilt, nor will I seek to bind
Thy unfettered will; only I fain would see thee
In happy wedlock bound, and feel the touch
Of childish hands again, and soothe my age
With sight of thy fair offspring round my knees."

Then she, because she loved her sire and fain
Would do his will, left him without a word,
Obedient to his hest; but day and night
The one unfading image of her dream
Filled all her longing sight, and day and night
The semblance of her Prince in all the pride
And bravery of battle shone on her.
Nor was there any strength in her to heal
The wound which love had made, by reasonings cold,
Or musing on the phantasies of sleep;
But still the fierce dart of the goddess burned

Within her soul, as when a stricken deer
O'er hill and dale escaping bears with her
The barb within her side; and oft alone
Within her secret chamber she would name
The name of him she loved, and oft by night,
When sleep had bound her fast, her pale lips formed
The syllables of his name. Through the long hours,
Waking or sleeping, were her thoughts on him;
So that the quenchless yearning long deferred
Made her heart sick, and like her heart, her form
Wasted, her fair cheek paled, and from her eyes
Looked out the silent suffering of her soul.

Now, when the day drew near which brought the feast,
One of her slaves, who loved her, chanced to hear
Her sweet voice wandering in dreams, and caught
The Prince's name; and, being full of grief
And pity for her pain, and fain to aid
The gentle girl she loved, made haste to send
A messenger to seek the Prince and tell him
How he was loved, and when the feast should be,
And how the King would have his daughter wed.
But to the Princess would she breathe no word
Of what was done, till, almost on the eve
Of the great feast, seeing her wan and pale
And all unhappy, falling at her knees,
She, with a prayer for pardon, told her all.

But when the Princess heard her, virgin shame—
Love drawing her and Pride of Maidenhood
In opposite ways till all distraught was she—
Flushed her pale cheek, and lit her languid gaze.
Yet since she knew that loving thought alone
Prompted the deed, being soft and pitiful,
She bade her have no fear, and though at first
Unwilling, by degrees a newborn hope
Chased all her shame away, and once again
A long unwonted rose upon her cheek
Bloomed, and a light long vanished fired her eyes.

Meanwhile upon the plains in glorious war
The brave Prince led his conquering hosts; but still,
Amid the shock of battle and the crash
Of hostile spears, one vision filled his soul.
Amid the changes of the hard-fought day,
Throughout the weary watches of the night,
The dream, the happy dream, returned again;
Always the selfsame vision of a maid

Fairer than earthly, filled his eyes and took
The savour from the triumph, ay, and touched
The warrior's heart with an unwonted ruth,
So that he shrank as never yet before
From every day's monotony of blood,
And saw with unaccustomed pain the sum
Of death and woe, and hopeless shattered lives,
Because a softer influence touched his soul.

Till one night, on the day before the feast
Which King Omartes destined for his peers,
While now his legions swept their conquering way
A hundred leagues or more from Tanais,
There came the message from the slave, and he
Within his tent, after the well-fought day,
Resting with that fair image in his eyes,
Woke suddenly to know that he was loved.

Then, in a moment, putting from him sleep
And well-earned rest, he bade his charioteer
Yoke to his chariot three unbroken colts
Which lately o'er the endless Scythian plain
Careered, untamed; and, through the sleeping camp,
Beneath the lucid aspect of the night,
He sped as speeds the wind. The great stars hung
Like lamps above the plain; the great stars sank
And faded in the dawn; the hot red sun
Leapt from the plain; noon faded into eve;
Again the same stars lit the lucid night;
And still, with scarce a pause, those fierce hoofs dashed
Across the curved plain onward, till he saw
Far off the well-lit palace casements gleam
Wherein his love was set.
Then suddenly
He checked his panting team, the rapid wheels
Ceased, and his mail and royal garb he hid
Beneath a rich robe such as nobles use
By Tanais; and to the lighted hall
He passed alone, bidding his charioteer
Await him in the darkness by the gate.

Now, when the Prince drew near the vestibule,
The feast long time had sped, and all the guests
Had eaten and drunk their fill; and he unseen,
Through the close throng of serving men and maids
Around the door, like some belated guest
To some obscurer station slipped, and took
The wine-cup with the rest, who marvelled not
To see him come, nor knew him; only she
Who sent the message whispered him a word:
"Have courage; she is there, and cometh soon.
Be brave; she loves thee only; watch and wait."

Even then the King Omartes, where he sate
On high among his nobles, gave command
To summon from her maiden chamber forth
The Princess. And obedient to the call,
Robed in pure white, clothed round with maiden shame,
Full of vague hope and tender yearning love,
To the high royal throne Odatis came.

And when the Prince beheld the maid, and saw
The wonder which so long had filled his soul—
His vision of the still night clothed with life
And breathing earthly air—and marked the heave
Of her white breast, and saw the tell-tale flush
Crimson her cheek with maiden modesty,
Scarce could his longing eager arms forbear
To clasp the virgin round, so fair she seemed.
But, being set far down from where the King
Sat high upon the daïs 'midst the crowd
Of eager emulous faces looking love,
None marked his passionate gaze, or stretched-forth hands;
Till came a pause, which hushed the deep-drawn sigh
Of admiration, as the jovial King,
Full tender of his girl, but flushed with wine,
Spake thus to her:
"Daughter, to this high feast
Are bidden all the nobles of our land.
Now, therefore, since to wed is good, and life
To the unwedded woman seems a load
Which few may bear, and none desire, I prithee,
This jewelled chalice taking, mingle wine
As well thou knowest, and the honeyed draught
Give to some noble youth of those thou seest
Along the well-ranged tables, knowing well
That him to whom thou givest, thou shalt wed.
I fetter not thy choice, girl. I grow old;
I have no son to share the weight of rule,
And fain would see thy children ere I die."

Then, with a kiss upon her blushing cheek,
He gave the maid the cup. The cressets' light
Fell on the jewelled chalice, which gave back
A thousand answering rays. Silent she stood
A moment, half in doubt, then down the file
Of close-ranked eager faces flushed with hope,
And eyes her beauty kindled more than wine,
Passed slow, a breathing statue. Her white robe
Among the purple and barbaric gold
Showed like the snowy plumage of a dove,
As down the hall, the cup within her hands,
She, now this way regarding and now that,

Passed, with a burning blush upon her cheek;
And on each youthful noble her large eyes
Rested a moment only, icy cold,
Though many indeed were there, brave, fair to see,
Fit for a maiden's love; but never at all
The one o'ermastering vision of her dream
Rose on her longing eyes, till hope itself
Grew faint, and, ere she gained the end, she turned
Sickening to where, along the opposite wall,
Sat other nobles young and brave as those,
But not the fated vision of her dream.

Meanwhile the Prince, who 'mid the close-set throng
Of humbler guests was hidden, saw her come
And turn ere she had marked him, and again
Down the long line of princely revellers
Pass slow as in a dream; and all his soul
Grew sick with dread lest haply, seeing not
The one expected face, and being meek
And dutiful, and reverent to her sire,
She in despair might make some sudden choice
And leave him lovelorn. And where'er she went
He could not choose but gaze, as oft in sleep
Some dreadful vision chains us that we fail
To speak or move, though to be still is death.
And once he feared that she had looked on him
And passed, and once he thought he saw her pause
By some tall comely youth; and then she reached
The furthest wall, and as she turned her face
And came toward him again to where the jars
Of sweet wine stood for mingling, with a bound
His heart went out to her; for now her cheek
As pale and lifeless as the icy moon,
And the dead hope within her eyes, and pain
Of hardly conquered tears, made sure his soul,
Knowing that she was his.
But she, dear heart,
Being sick indeed with love, and in despair,
Yet reverencing her duty to her sire,
Turned half-distraught to fill the fated cup
And with it mar her life.
But as she stood
Alone within the vestibule and poured
The sweet wine forth, slow, trembling, blind with tears,
A voice beside her whispered, "Love, I am here!"
And looking round her, at her side she saw,
A youthful mailèd form—the festal robe
Flung backward, and the face, the mouth, the eyes
Whereof the vision filled her night and day.

Then straight, without a word, with one deep sigh,
She held the wine-cup forth. He poured out first
Libation to the goddess, and the rest
Drained at a draught, and cast his arms round her,
And down the long-drawn sounding colonnade
Snatched her to where without, beneath the dawn,
The brave steeds waited and the charioteer.
His robe he round her threw; they saw the flare
Of torches at the gate; they heard the shouts
Of hot pursuit grow fainter; till at last,
In solitude, across the rounding plain
They flew through waking day, until they came
To Media, and were wed. And soon her sire,
Knowing their love, consented, and they lived
Long happy lives; such is the might of Love.

That is the tale the soldier from the East,
Chares of Mytilené, ages gone,
Told oftentimes at many a joyous feast
In Hellas; and he said that all the folk
In Media loved it, and their painters limned
The story in the temples of their gods,
And in the stately palaces of kings,
Because they reverenced the might of Love.

IN WILD WALES.

I.—At the Eisteddfod.

The close-ranked faces rise,
With their watching, eager eyes,
And the banners and the mottoes blaze above;
And without, on either hand,
The eternal mountains stand,
And the salt sea river ebbs and flows again,
And through the thin-drawn bridge the wandering winds complain.

Here is the Congress met,
The bardic senate set,
And young hearts flutter at the voice of fate;
All the fair August day
Song echoes, harpers play,
And on the unaccustomed ear the strange
Penillion rise and fall through change and counter-change.

Oh Mona, land of song!
Oh mother of Wales! how long
From thy dear shores an exile have I been!
Still from thy lonely plains,
Ascend the old sweet strains,
And at the mine, or plough, or humble home,
The dreaming peasant hears diviner music come.

This innocent, peaceful strife,
This struggle to fuller life,
Is still the one delight of Cymric souls—
Swell, blended rhythms! still
The gay pavilions fill.

Soar, oh young voices, resonant and fair;
Still let the sheathed sword gleam above the bardic chair.
* * * *
The Menai ebbs and flows,
And the song-tide wanes and goes,
And the singers and the harp-players are dumb;
The eternal mountains rise
Like a cloud upon the skies,
And my heart is full of joy for the songs that are still,
The deep sea and the soaring hills, and the steadfast Omnipotent Will.

II.—AT THE MEETING FIELD.

HERE is the complement of what I saw
When late I sojourned in the halls of song,
The greater stronger Force, the higher Law,
Of those which carry Cymric souls along.

No dim Cathedral's fretted aisles were there,
No gay pavilion fair, with banners hung:
The eloquent pleading voice, the deep hymns sung,
The bright sun, and the clear unfettered air.

These were the only ritual, this the fane,
A poor fane doubtless and a feeble rite
For those who find religion in dim light,
Strange vestments, incensed air, and blazoned pane.

But the rapt crowd, the reverent mute throng,
When the vast listening semi-circle round,
Rang to the old man's voice serenely strong,
Or swept along in stormy bursts of sound.

Where found we these in temples made with hands?
Where, the low moan which marks the awakened soul?
Where, this rude eloquence whose strong waves roll
Deep waters, swift to bear their Lord's commands?

Where found we these? 'neath what high fretted dome?
I know not. I have knelt 'neath many, yet
Have heard few words so rapt and burning come,
Nor marked so many eyes divinely wet,

As here I knew—"What will you do, oh friends,
When life ebbs fast and the dim light is low,
When sunk in gloom the day of pleasure ends,
And the night cometh, and your being runs slow,

And nought is left you of your revelries,
Your drunken nights, your wantonness, your ill—
And lo! the last dawn rises cold and chill,
And lo! the lightning of All-seeing eyes,

What will you do?" And when the low voice ceased,
And from the gathered thousands surged the hymn,
Some strong power choked my voice, my eyes grew dim.
I knew that old man eloquent, a priest.

There is a consecration not of man,
Nor given by laid-on hands nor acted rite,
A priesthood fixed since the firm earth began,
A dedication to the eye of Light,

And this is of them. What the form of creed
I care not, hardly the fair tongue I know,
But this I know, that when the concourse freed
From that strong influence, went sedate and slow,

I thought when on the Galilean shore
By the Great Priest the multitudes were led,
The bread of life, miraculously more,
Sufficed for all who came, and they were fed.

SUFFRAGES.

"SURELY," said a voice, "O Lord, Thy judgments
Are dreadful and hard to understand.
Thy laws which Thou madest, they withstand Thee,
They stand against Thee and Thy command:
Thy poor, they are with us evermore;
They suffer terrible things and sore;
They are starved, they are sick, they die,
And there is none to help or heed;
They come with a great and bitter cry,
They hardly dare to whisper, as they plead;
And there is none to hear them, God or man;
And it is little indeed that all our pity can.

What, and shall I be moved to tears,
As I sit in this still chamber here alone,
By the pity of it,—the childish lives that groan,
The miseries and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears
Of this wonderful legend of life, that is one and the same
Though it differ in weal and in happiness, honour and fame,—
Shall I turn, who am no more than a worm, to Thee,
From the pity of it—the want, the misery,
And with strong yearnings beat, and rebellions wild,
Seeing death written, and pain, in the face of a child;—
And yet art Thou unmoved!
Ah, Lord, if Thou sawest surely!—and yet Thou dost see;
And if Thou knewest indeed!—and yet all things are clear to Thee.

For, Lord, of a truth Thy great ones,
Who have not their wealth of their own desert,
Live ever equal lives and sure,
And are never vexed nor suffer hurt,
But through long untroubled years endure

Until they join Thee, and are in bliss;
Or, maybe, are carried away from Thee, and miss
Thy Face, which is too pure for them to see,
And are thenceforth in misery:
But, nevertheless, upon the earth
They come to neither sorrow nor dearth.
They are great, and they live out their lives, and Thou lettest them be;
Thou dost not punish them here, if they despise
Thy poor and pass them by with averted eyes.
They are strong and mighty, and never in danger to fall;
But Thou, Lord, art mighty and canst, and yet carest not at all.

But wherefore is it that such things are;—
That want and famine, and blood and war
Are everywhere, and do prevail?
And wherefore is it the same monotonous tale
Is ever told by the lips of men?
For there is hardly so hard a heart
In the breast of a man who has taken his part
In the world, and has little children around his knees,
But is filled with great love for them as Thou art for these,
And would give up all for their good, and is vexed day and night
With fatherly doubts and fears and yearnings for right,
And grows sick, if evil come nigh them body or soul,
And yet is but a feeble thing, without strength or control.

But Thou art almighty for good; yet Thy plagues, they come,
Hunger and want and disease, in a terrible sum;
And the poor fathers waste, and are stricken with slow decay;
And the children fall sick, and are starving, day after day;
And the hospital wards are choked; and the fire and the flood
Vex men still, and the leaguered cities are red with blood.

Ay, yet not the less, O Lord,
I know Thou art just and art good indeed.
This is it that doth perplex my thought,
So that I rest not content in any creed.
If I knew that Thou wert the Lord of Ill,
Then were I untouched still,
And, if I would, might worship at Thy shrine;
Or if my mind might prove no Will Divine
Inspired the dull mechanical reign of Law.
But now, while Thou art surely, and art good,
And wouldst Thy creatures have in happiness,
Alway the sword, the plague prevail no less,
Not less, not less Thy laws are based in blood.
And such deep inequalities of lot
Confuse our thought, as if Thy hand were not.
All blessings, health and wealth and honours spent
On some unworthy sordid instrument;
Thy highest gift of genius flung away
On some vile thing of meanest clay,

Who fouls the ingrate lips, touched with Thy fire,
With worse than common mire:
How should I fail alone, when all things groan,
To let my weak voice take a pleading tone!
How should I speak a comfortable word
When such things are, O Lord!"

This is the cry that goes up for ever
To Heaven from weak and striving souls:
But the calm Voice makes answer to them never;
The undelaying chariot onward rolls.

But another voice: "O Lord of all, I bless Thee,
I bless Thee and give thanks for all.
Thou hast kept me from my childhood up,
Thou hast not let me fall.
All the fair days of my youth
Thou wast beside, me and Thy truth.
I bless Thee that Thou didst withhold
The blight of fame, the curse of gold;
Because Thou hast spared my soul as yet,
Amid the wholesome toil of each swift day,
The tumult and the fret
Which carry worldly lives from Thee away.
I thank Thee for the sorrows Thou hast sent,
Being in all things content
To see in every loss a greater gain,
A joy in every pain;
The losses I have known, since still I know
Lives, hidden with Thee, are and grow.
I do not know, I cannot tell,
How it may be, yet death and pain are well:
I know that Thou art good and mild,
Though sickness take and break the helpless child;
'Twas Thou, none else, that gav'st the mother's love,
And even her anguish came from Thee above.
I am content to be that which Thou wilt:
Tho' humble be my pathway and obscure,
Yet from all stain of guilt
Keep Thou me pure.
Or if Thy evil still awhile must find
Its seat within my mind,
Be it as Thou wilt, I am not afraid.

And for the world Thy hand has made,
Thy beautiful world, so wondrous fair:
Thy mysteries of dawn, Thy cloudless days;
Thy mountains, soaring high through Thy pure air;
Thy glittering sea, sounding perpetual praise;
Thy starlit skies, whence worlds unnumbered gaze;
Thy earth, which in Thy bounteous summer-tide
Is clad in flowery robes and glorified;
Thy still primeval forests, deeply stirred
By Thy great winds as by an unknown word;
Thy fair, light-winged creatures, blithe and free;
Thy dear brutes living, dying, silently:
Shall I from them no voice to praise Thee find?
Thy praise is hymned by every balmy wind

That wanders o'er a wilderness of flowers;
By every happy brute which asks not why,
But rears its brood and is content to die.
From Thee has come whatever good is ours;—
The gift of love that doth exalt the race;
The gift of childhood with its nameless grace;
The gift of age which slow through ripe decay,
Like some fair fading sunset dies away;
The gift of homes happy with honest wealth,
And fair lives flowering in unbroken health,—
All these are Thine, and the good gifts of brain,
Which to heights greater than the earth can gain,
And can our little minds project to Thee,
Through Infinite Space—across Eternity.
For these I praise Thy name; but above all
The precious gifts Thy bounteous hand lets fall,
I praise Thee for the power to love the Right,
Though Wrong awhile show fairer to the sight;
The power to sin, the dreadful power to choose
The evil portion and the good refuse;
And last, when all the power of ill is spent,
The power to seek Thy face and to repent."

This is the answering cry that goes for ever
To Heaven from blest untroubled souls:
But the calm Voice makes answer to them never;
The undelaying chariot onward rolls.

LOOK OUT, O LOVE.

LOOK out, O Love, across the sea:
A soft breeze fans the summer night,
The low waves murmur lovingly,
And lo! the beacon's fitful light.

Some day perchance, when I am gone,
And muse by far-off tropic seas,
You may be gazing here alone,
On starlit waves and skies like these.

Or perhaps together, you and I,
Rapt each in each, no other by,
Shall watch again that fitful flame,
And know that we are not the same.

Or maybe we shall come no more,
But prisoned on some unknown shore,
In dreams shall see that light again,
And hear that starlit sea complain.

CLYTÆMNESTRA IN PARIS.

I SEEMED to pace the dreadful corridors
Of a still foreign prison, blank and white,
And in a bare and solitary cell
To find a lonely woman, soft of voice
And mild of eye, who never till life's end
Should pass those frowning gates. Methought I asked her

The story of her crime, and what hard fate
Left her, so gentle seeming, fettered there,
Hopeless, a murderess at whose very name
Men shuddered still. And to my questioning
Methought that dreadful soul made answer thus:

"Yes, I suppose I liked him, though I know not;
I hardly know what love may be; how should I?—
I a young girl wedded without my will,
As is our custom here, to a man old,
Not perhaps in years, but dark experiences.
What had we two in common, that worn man,
And I, an untrained girl? It was not strange
If when that shallow boy, with his bold tongue,
And his gay eyes, and curls, and budding beard,
Flattered me, I was weak. I think all women
Are weak sometimes, and overprone to love
When the man is young, and straight, and 'twas a triumph
To see the disappointed envious jades
Wince as he passed them carelessly, nor heeded
Their shallow wiles to trap him,—ay, a triumph!
And that was all; I hardly know, indeed,
If it was love that drove, or only pride
To hold what others grudged me. Vain he was,
And selfish, and a coward, as you shall hear.
Handsome enough, I grant you, to betray
A stronger soul than mine. Indeed, I think,
He never cared for me nor I for him
(For there were others after him): I knew it,
Then chiefest, when our comedy of life
Was turning at the last to tragedy.

"Now that I was unfaithful, a false wife,
I value not men's sneers at a pin's point,
We have a right to love and to be loved;
Not the mere careless tolerance of the spouse
Who has none to give. True, if I were a nun,
Vowed to a white and cloistered life, no doubt
'Twere otherwise. They tell me there are women
Who are so rapt by thoughts of the poor, of churches,
Of public ends, of charity, of schools,
Of Heaven knows what, they live their lives untouched
By passion; but for us, who are but women,
Not bred on moonlight, made of common clay,
Untrained for aught but common bourgeois life,
Life is no mystical pale procession winding
Its way from the cradle to the grave, but rather
A thing of hot swift flushes, fierce delights,

Good eating, dances, wines, and all the rest,
When the occasion comes. I never loved him,
I tell you; therefore, maybe, did no sin.

"But when this fellow must presume to boast,
Grow cold, have scruples for his soul and mine,
And turn to other younger lives, and pass
My door to-day with this one, then with that,
And all the gossips of the quarter sneered,
And knew I was deserted, do you think it
A wonder that my eyes, opened at last,
Saw all the folly and the wickedness
(If sweet it were, where were the wickedness?)
Which bore such bitter fruit? Think you it strange
That I should turn for aid, ay, and revenge,
To my wronged spouse—if wronged he be, indeed,
Who doth consent as he did? When I told him,
Amid my tears, he made but small pretence
Of jealousy at all; only his pride
Was perhaps a little wounded. And indeed
It took such long confessions, such grave pain
Of soul, such agony of remorse of mine
To move him but a little, that I grew
So weary of it all, it almost checked
My penitence, and left me free to choose
Another for my love; but at the last,
Long labour, feigned reports, the neighbours' sneers,
These drove him at the last, good easy man,
To such a depth of hatred, that my task
Grew lighter, and my heart.
He bade me write
Loving appeals, recalling our past days
Together; and I wrote them, using all
The armoury of loving cozening words
With which craft arms us women: but in vain,
For whether some new love engrossed, or whether
He wearied of me and my love, I know not,
Only, in spite of all, no answer came.

"At length, since I could get no word from him,
My husband bade me write—or was it I
Who thought of the device? Pray you believe me,
I would speak nothing else than the whole truth,
But these sad dreadful deeds confuse the brain.
Well, perhaps 'twas I, who knew his weakness well;
I do not know, but somehow it came to pass
I wrote a crafty letter, begging of him,
By all our former kindness, former wrong,
If for the last time, recognizing well
That all was done between us evermore,
We might, for one last evening, meet and part.

And, knowing he was needy, and his greed,—
'If only he would come,' I wrote to him,
'I had some secret savings, and desired—
For what need comes there closer than a friend's?—
To help him in his trouble.'
Swift there came—
The viper!—hypocritical words of love:
Yes, he would come, for the old love still lived,
He knew it, ah, too well; not all the glamour
Of other eyes and lips could ever quench
The fire of that mad passion. He would come,
Loving as ever, longing for the day.

"Now when we had the answer, straight we three—
My husband and myself, and his weak brother,
Whose daughter to her first communion went
That very day,—and I, too, took the Host
As earnest of changed life,—we three, I say,
At a little feast we made to celebrate
The brothers reconciled (in families
There come dissensions, as you know), devised
His punishment. We hired, in a still suburb,
A cottage standing backward from the street,
Beyond an avenue of sycamores;
A lonely place, unnoticed. Day by day
We went, we three together—for I feared
Lest, if there were no third, the strength of youth
Might bear my husband down—we went to make
All needful preparations. First we spread
Over all the floor a colour like to blood,
For deep's the stain of blood, and what shall cleanse it?
Also, my husband, from a neighbouring wood,
Had brought a boar-trap, sharp with cruel knives
And jaggèd teeth, to close with a snap and tear
The wild beast caught within it. But I deemed
The risk too great, the prey might slip away;
Therefore, that he might meet his punishment,
And to prevent the sound of cries and groans,
My husband fashioned for his lips a gag,
And on the mantel left it, and the means
To strike a light. And being thus prepared,
We three returned to Paris; there long time
We sate eating and drinking of the best,
As those do who have taken a resolve
Whence no escape is, save to do and die.

"Then the two men went back and left me there,
With all my part to do. It was an hour
Or more before the time when my poor dupe

Had fixed to meet me. Wandering thus alone
Through the old streets, seeing the common sights
Of every day, the innocent child-faces
Homing from school, so like my little ones,
I seemed to lose all count of time. At length,
Because it was the Ascension Feast, there came
A waft of music from the open doors
Of a near church, and, entering in, I found
The incensed air, all I remembered well—
The lights, the soaring chants, the kneeling crowds,
When I believed and knelt. They seemed to soothe
My half bewildered fancy, and I thought—
What if a woman, who mayhap had sinned
But lightly, wishing to repair her wrong,
And bound thereby to some dark daring deed
Of peril, should come here, and kneel awhile,
And ask a blessing for the deed, of her
Who is Heaven's Queen and knows our weaknesses,
Being herself a woman! So I knelt
In worship, and the soaring voices clear
And the dim heights and suffrage-laden air
Filled me with comfort for my soul, and nerved
My failing heart, and winged time's lagging flight,
Till lo the hour was come when I should go
To meet him for the last time.

"When we left
The city far behind, the sweet May night
Was falling on the quiet village street;
There was a scent of hawthorn on the air
As we passed on with feint of loving words,—
Passed slow like lovers to the appointed place,
Passed to the place of punishment and doom.

"But when we reached the darkling avenue
Of sycamores, which to the silent house
Led through a palpable gloom, I felt him shudder
With some blind vague presentiment of ill,
And he would go no further; but I clung
Around him close, laughed all his fear to scorn,
Whispered words in his ear, and step by step,
My soul on reparation being bent,
Drew him reluctant to the fated door
Where lay my spouse in ambush, and swift death.

"I think I hear the dreadful noise of the key,
Turning within the disused lock, the hall
Breathing a false desertion, the loud sound

Of both our footsteps echoing through the house.
I could not choose but tremble. Yet I knew
'Twas but a foolish weakness. Then I struck
A match, and in the burst of sudden light
I saw the ruddy cheek grown ashy pale,
And as he doffed his hat, I marked the curls
On his white forehead, and the boyish grace
Which hung around him still, and almost felt
Compassion. Then the darkness came again,
And hid him, and I groped to find his hand,
Clutched it with mine, and led him to the door.

"But when within the darkling room we were
Where swift death waited him, not dalliance,
Three times my trembling fingers failed to wake
The twinkling light which scarce could pierce the gloom
Which hid my husband. Oh, to see his face
When the dark aspect and the furious eyes
Glared out on him! 'I am lost!' he cried, 'I am lost!'
And then the sound of swift and desperate fight
And a death struggle. Listening, as I stood
Without, with that mean craven hound, our brother,
I heard low cries of rage, and knew despair
And youth had nerved the unarmed in such sort
As made the conflict doubtful. Then I rushed
Between them, threw my arms around him, clogged
His force and held him fast, crying the while,
'Wretch, would you kill my husband!' —held him fast,
As coils a serpent round the escaping deer,
Until my husband, hissing forth his hate,
'Villain, I pierce thy heart as thou hast mine,'
Stabbed through and through his heart.

"But oh, but oh
The lonely road, beneath the dreadful stars!
To the swift stream, we three—nay, nay, we four—
One on the child's poor carriage covered o'er,
And three who drew him onward, on the road,
That dead thing, having neither eye nor ear,
Which late was full of life, and strife, and hate.
On that dumb silence, came no wayfarer,
And once the covering which concealed our load
Slipped down, and left the ghastly blood-stained thing
Open to prying eyes, but none were there;
And then the darkling river, and the sound

When, with lead coiled around it, the dead corpse
Sank with a sullen plunge within the deep,
And took with it the tokens of our crime.

"Then with a something of relief, as those
Who have passed through some great peril all unharmed,
We went and burned the blood-stained signs of death,
And left the dreadful place, and once more sped
To Paris and to sleep, till the new day,
Now risen to high noon, touched our sad dreams.

"And that day, since we could not work as yet,
We to the Picture Gallery went, and there
We took our fill of nude voluptuous limbs,
Mingled with scenes of horror bathed in blood,
Such as our painters love. So week by week,
Careless and unafraid, we spent our days,
Till when that sad night faded; swift there rose,
Bursting the weights that kept it, the pale corpse,
A damning witness from the deep, and brought
The dreadful past again, and with it doom.

"You know how we were tried, and how things went,
The cozening speeches, the brow-beating judge,
The petty crafts which make the pleader's art,
The dolts who sit in judgment, when the one
Who knows all must be silent; but you know not
The intolerable burden of suspense,
The hard and hateful gaze of hungry eyes
Which gloat upon your suffering. When doom came
It was well to know the worst, and hear no more
The half-forgotten horrors. But I think
The sense of common peril, common wrong,
Knits us in unity indissoluble,
Closer than years of converse. When my husband,
Braving his doom, embraced me as he went:
'Wife, so thou live I care not,' all my heart
Went out to him for a moment, and I cried,
'Let me die too, my guilt is more than his.'

"Some quibble marred the sentence, and once more
The miserable tale was told afresh:
Once more I stood before those hungry eyes,
And when 'twas done we went forth slaves for life,
Both with an equal doom, and ever since
We suffer the same pains in solitude,
Slaves fettered fast, whom only death sets free.

"That is my tale told truly. Now you know,

Sir, of what fashion I am made: a woman
Gentle, you see, and mild eyed. If I sinned
Surely there was temptation, and I sought
Such reparation as I could. There are here
Tigresses, and not women, black of brow
And strong of arm, who have struck down or stabbed
Husband, or child, or lover, not as I,
But driven by rage and jealousy, and drink,
These creatures of the devil, as I pass
I see them shrink and shudder. The young priest
Of the prison, a well-favoured lad he is,
When I confessed to him bore on his brow
Cold drops of agony; the Sister grew
So pale at what I told her, that I thought
She was like to swoon away, until I soothed her.
Poor wretch, she has much to learn; and here I am,
And shall be till my hair turns grey, my eyes
Grow dim, and I have clean forgotten all
That brought me here, and all my former life
Fades like a once-heard tale. In the long nights,
As I lie alone in my cell like any nun,
I wake sometimes with a start, and seem to hear
That rusty lock turn, and those echoing feet
Down that dark passage, and I seem to see
The dreadful stare of those despairing eyes,
And then there sounds, a plunge in the deep, and I
Lie shivering till the dawn. I have no comfort,
Except the holy Mass; for see you, sir,
I was devout until they scoffed at me.
And now I know there is a hell indeed,
Since this place is on earth. I do not think
I have much cause to fear death, should it come;
For whoso strives for Duty, all the Saints
And the Madonna needs must love, and I,
I have done what penitence could do; and here
What have I of reward?—my children taken
As clean from me as if they were dead indeed,
Trained to forget their mother. Sir, I see,
Beyond these shallow phantasms of life;
And this I hold, that one whose conscience shows
As clear as mine must needs be justified.
I love the holy Mass, and take the Host
As often as I may, being of good heart.
For what was it she did in Holy Writ,
The Kenite's wife of old? I do not read
That women shrunk from her because she drave

The nail through her guest's brain; nay, rather, praise
Was hers: yet was she not betrayed as I,
Nor yet repentant of her wrong and seeking
To do what good was left. But look you, sir,
If I was once repentant, that is past:
I hate those black-browed women, who turn from me,
That smooth priest and that poor fool with her cross,
And that strange pink-and-whiteness of the nun.
And sometimes when they come I let them hear
Such things as make the pious hypocrites turn
And cross themselves. And for that tigress crew,
If I might only steal to their cells at night
With a knife, I would teach them, what it is to stab;
Or even without one, that these little hands
Can strangle with the best.
Ah, you draw back,
You too are shocked forsooth. Listen, you wretch,
Who are walking free while I am prisoned here:
How many thoughts of murder have you nursed
Within your miserable heart! how many
Low, foul desires which would degrade the brute!
Do you think I do not know you men? What was it
That kept your hands unstained, but accident?—
Accident, did I say? or was it rather
Cowardice, that you feared the stripes of the law,
And did not dare to do your will or die?—
Accident! then, I pray you, where the merit
To have abstained? Or if you claim, indeed,
Such precious self-restraint as keeps your feet
From straying, where the credit? since it came
A gift as much unearned as other's ill,
Which lurked for them a little tiny speck
Hidden in the convolutions of the brain,
To grow with their growth, and wax with their years, and leave
The wretch at last in Hell. Do you deem it just,
The Potter with our clay upon His wheel
Should shape it in such form? I love not God,
Being such; I hate Him rather: I, His creature,
I do impugn His justice or His power,
I will not feign obedience—I, a woman,
Of a soft nature, who would love my love,
And my child, and nothing more; who am, instead,
A murderess, as they tell me, pining here
In hell before my time."

Even as she spake
I seemed to be again as when I saw
The murderess of old time; and once again

Within that modern prison, blank and white,
There came the viewless trouble in the air
Which took her, and the sweep of wings unseen,
And terrible sounds which swooped on her and hushed
Her voice and seemed to occupy her soul
With horror and despair; and as I passed
The crucifix within the corridor,
"How long?" I cried, "How long?"

PICTURES—III.

THE sad slow dawn of winter; frozen trees
And trampled snow within a lonely wood;
One shrouded form, which to the city flees;
And one, a masquer, lying in his blood.

A full sun blazing with unclouded day,
Till the bright waters mingle with the sky;
And on the dazzling verge, uplifted high;
White sails mysterious slowly pass away.

Hidden in a trackless and primæval wood,
Long-buried temples of an unknown race,
And one colossal idol; on its face
A changeless sneer, blighting the solitude.

A fair girl half undraped, who blithely sings;
Her white robe poised upon one budding breast;
While at her side, invisible, unconfessed,
Love folds her with the shelter of his wings.

Black clouds embattled on a lurid sky,
And one keen flash, like an awakened soul,
Piercing the hidden depths, while momently
One waits to hear enormous thunders roll.

Two helpless girls upon a blazing wall,
The keen flames leaping always high and higher;
But faster, faster than the hungry fire,
Brave hearts which climb to save them ere they fall.

A youthful martyr, looking to the skies
From rack and stake, from torment and disgrace;
And suddenly heaven opened to his eyes,
A beckoning hand, a tender heavenly face.

A home on a fair English hill; away
Stretch undulating plains, now gold now green,
With park and lake and glade, and homestead grey;
And crowning all, the blue sea dimly seen.

A lifeless, voiceless, world of age-long snow,
Where winter crawls on slow through endless night,
And safe within a low hut's speck of light,
Strong souls alert and hopeful, by the glow.

A great ship forging slowly from the shore,
And on the broad deck weeping figures bent;
And on the gliding pierhead, sorrow-spent,
Those whom the voyagers shall see no more.

CONFESSION.

WHO is there but at times has seen,
While his past days before him stand,
In all the chances which have been,
The guidance of a hidden Hand,

Which still has ruled his growing life,
Through weal and woe, through joy and pain,
Through fancied good, through useless strife,
And empty pleasure sought in vain;

Which often has withheld the meed
He longed for once, with yearnings blind,
And given the truest prize indeed,
The harvest of a blessed mind;

And so accepts the common lot
Content, whate'er the Ruler would,
Since all that has been, or has not,
Springs from a hidden root of good?

* * * *

Yet some there are maybe to-day,
Whose childhood at the mother's knee
Was taught to bow itself and pray,
Nor ever thirsted to be free,

Who now, 'mid warring voices loud,
Have lost the faith they held before,
Nor through the jangling of the crowd
Can hear the earlier message more.

A brute Fate vexes them, the reign
Of dumb laws, speeding onward still,
Regardless of the waste and pain,
Which all the labouring earth do fill.

They look to see the rule of Right;
They find it not, and in its stead
But slow survivals, born of Might,
And all the early Godhead dead;

They see it not, and droop and faint
And are unhappy, doubting God;
Yet every step their feet have trod
Was trodden before them by a saint.

* * * *

Oh, doubting soul, look up, behold
The eternal heavens above thy head,
The solid earth beneath, its mould
Compacted of the unnumbered dead.

Here the eternal problems grow,
And with each day are solved and done,

When some spent life, like melting
snow,
Breathes forth its essence to the sun.

As death is, life is—without end;
Wrong with right mingles, joy with
pain;
Forbid two meeting streams to blend,
'Twere not more hopeless, nor more
vain.

Though Death with Life, though Wrong
with Right,
Are bound within the scheme of things,
Yet can our souls, on soaring wings,
Gain to a loftier purer height,

Where death is not, nor any life,
Nor right nor wrong, nor joy nor pain;
But changeless Being, lacking strife,
Doth through all change, unchanged
remain.

Should Wrong prevail o'er all the
earth,
'Twere nought if only we discern
The one great truth, which if we learn,
All else beside is little worth.

That Right, is that which must prevail,
If not here, there, if not now, then,
Is the one Truth which shall not fail,
For all the doubts and fears of men.

What if a myriad ages still
Of wrong and pain, of waste and blood,
Confuse our thought, triumphant Good
At length, at last, our souls can fill

With such assurance as the Voice
Which from the fiery mountain pealed,
And bade the kneeling hosts rejoice
That God was in His laws revealed.

Nay even might our thought conceive
The final victory of Ill,
Not so, were it folly to believe
That Right is higher, purer still.

Who knows the Eternal "Ought"
knows well
That whoso loves and seeks the Right,
For him God shines with changeless
light,
Ay, to the lowest deeps of Hell.

And whoso knoweth God indeed,
The fixed foundations of his creed
Know neither changing nor decay,
Though all creation pass away.

LOVE UNCHANGED.

My love, my love, if I were old,
My body bent, my blood grown cold,
With thin white hairs upon my brow,
Say wouldst thou think of me as now?
Wouldst thou cling to me still,
As down life's sloping hill
We came at last through the unresting
years?
Art thou prepared for tears,
For time's sure-coming losses,
For life's despites and crosses,
My love, my love?

Ah! brief our little, little day;
Ah! years that fleet so fast away;
Before our summer scarce begun,
Look, spring and blossom-tide are
done!
When all things hasten past,
How should love only last?
How should our souls alone unchanged
remain?—
Come pleasure or come pain,

In days of joy and gladness,
In years of grief and sadness,
Love shall be love!

AT THE END.

When the five gateways of the soul
Are closing one by one,
When our being's currents slowly roll
And day is done,
What shall our chiefest comfort be
Amid this misery?

Not to have stores heaped up on high
Of gold and precious things,
Not to have flown from sky to sky
On Fame's wide wings,—
These things a little space do last,
And then are overpast.

Nor to have worked with patient brain
In senate or in mart,
To have gained the meed which those attain
Who have played their part,—
Effort is fair, success is sweet,
But leave life incomplete.

Nor to have said, as the fool says,
"Be merry, soul, rejoice;
"Thou hast laid up store for many days."
Oh, foolish voice!
Already at thy gate the feet
Of the corpse-bearers meet.

Nor to have heaped up precious store
Of all the gains of time,
Of long-dead sages' treasured lore,
Or deathless rhyme,—
Though Learning be a comely maid,
Death maketh her afraid.

Nor to have drained the cup of youth,
To the sweet maddening lees;
Nor, rapt by dreams of Hidden Truth,
To have spurned all these;—
Pleasure, Denial, touch not him
Whose body and mind are dim.

Not one of all these things shall I
For comfort use, or strength,
When the sure hour, when I must die,
Takes me at length;
One thought alone shall bring redress
For that great heaviness:—

That I have held each struggling soul
As of one kin and blood,
That one sure link doth all control
To one close brotherhood;
For who the race of men doth love,
Loves also Him above.

THREE BRETON POEMS.

I.

THE ORPHAN GIRL OF LANNION.

In seventeen hundred and eighty-three,
To Lannion came dole and misery.

Mignon an orphan, as good as fair,
Served in the little hostelry there.

One darkling night, when the hour was late,
Two travellers rang at the outer gate.

"Quick, hostess! supper, red wine, and food;
We have money to pay, so that all be good."

When they had drunken enough, and more,
"Here is white money to pay the score.

"And now shall your little serving-maid come,
With her lantern lighted, to guide us home."

"Gentles, in all our wide Brittany
There is no man would harm her, so let it be."

Forth went the maid, full of innocent pride,
Fearless and free, with her light by her side.

* * * *

When they were far on their lonely way,
They began to whisper, and mutter, and say,

"Little maid, your face is as fair and bright
As the foam on the wave in the morning light."

"Gentles, I pray you, flatter me not:
It is as God made it—no other, God wot;

"And were it fairer, I tell you true—
Ay, a hundred times fairer—'twere nought to you."

"To judge, little maid, by your sober speech,
You know all the good priests at the school can teach;

"To judge from your accents, discreet and mild,
You were bred in the convent cloister, my child."

"No teacher had I, neither priest nor nun;
There was no one to teach me on earth, not one.

"But while by my father's poor hearth I wrought,
God filled me with many a holy thought."

"Set down your lantern and put out the light.
Here is gold: none can help you, 'tis dead of night."

"Good sirs! for my brother the young priest's sake;
If he heard such sayings his heart would break."

* * * *

"Oh, plunge me down fathoms deep in the sea,
Of your mercy, rather than this thing be!

"Rather than this—'twere a lighter doom—
Oh bury me quick in a living tomb!"

* * * *

The motherly hostess, sore afraid,
Waited in vain for her little maid.

She watched by the chill hearth's flickering light
Till the bell tolled twice through the black dead night.

Then cried, "Up, serving-men, sleep no more!
Help!—little maid Mignon lies drowned in gore."

* * * *

By the cross she lay dead, in the dead cold night,
But beside her her lantern was still alight!

II.

THE FOSTER BROTHER.

Of all the noble damsels, in all our Brittany,
Gwennola was the sweetest far, a maiden fair to see.

Scarce eighteen summers shed their gold upon her shapely head,
Yet all who loved the fair girl best were numbered with the dead—

Her father and her mother, and eke her sisters dear.
Ah! Mary, pity 'twas to see her shed the bitter tear

At her casement in the castle, where a step-dame now bare sway,
Her dim eyes fixed upon the sea, which glimmered far away.

* * * *

For three long years she watched in vain, in dole and misery,
To see her foster brother's sail rise up from under sea;

For three long years she watched in vain, hoping each day would send
The only heart which beat to hers, her lover and her friend.

"Go, get you gone and tend the kine," the cruel step-dame said;
"Leave brooding over long-past years: go, earn your daily bread."

She woke her, ere the darkling dawns, while yet 'twas dead of night,
To sweep the floors and cleanse the house, and set the fires alight;

To fetch the water from the brook, again and yet again,
With heavy toil and panting breath, and young form bent in twain.

* * * *

One darkling winter morning, before the dawning light,
With ringing hoofs, across the brook there rode a noble knight:

"Good morrow, gracious maiden, and art thou free to wed?"
And she, so young she was and meek, "I know not, sir," she said.

"I prithee tell me, maiden, if thou art fancy-free?"
"To none, sir, have I plighted yet my maiden troth," said she.

"Then take, fair maid, this ring of gold, and to your step-dame say,
That to-day your troth is plighted to a knight from far away;

"That at Nantes a battle fierce was fought, wherein his squire was slain,
And he himself lies stricken sore upon his bed of pain;

"But when three weeks are overpast, whatever fate betide,
He will come himself full gaily, and claim thee for his bride."

Affrighted ran she to her home, when, lo, a wondrous thing!
For on her slender finger blazed her foster brother's ring.

II.

The weeks crept onward slowly, crept slowly—one, two, three;
But never came the young knight, no never more came he.

"Come, it is time that you were wed, for I have sought for you
A bridegroom fitted to your rank, an honest man and true."

"Nay, nay, I prithee, step-dame, there is none that I can wed,
Only my foster brother dear I love, alive or dead.

"With this ring his troth he plighted, and whatever fate betide,
He will come himself full gaily, and claim me for his bride."

"Peace, with thy golden wedding-ring! peace, fool, or I will teach
With blows thy senseless chattering tongue to hold discreeter speech;

"To-morrow thou shalt be the bride, whether thou wilt or not,
Of Giles the neat-herd, honest man: ay, this shall be thy lot."

"Of Giles the neat-herd, saidst thou? oh, I shall die of pain!
Oh mother, dear dead mother, that thou wert in life again!"

"Go, cry and wail without the house; go, feed on misery:
Go, take thy fill of moans and tears, for wedded thou shalt be."

III.

Just then the ancient sexton, with the bell that tolls the dead,
Went up and down the country side, and these the words he said:—

"Pray for the soul of one who was a brave and loyal knight,
Who bare at Nantes a grievous hurt, what time they fought the fight:

"To-morrow eve, at set of sun, amid the gathering gloom,
From the white church they bear him forth, to rest within the tomb."

IV.

"Thou art early from the wedding feast!" "Good truth, I could not stay;
I dared not see the piteous sight, and therefore turned away;

"I could not bear the pity and the horror in her eyne,
As she stood so fair, in blank despair, within the sacred shrine.

"Around the hapless maiden, all were weeping bitterly,
And the good old rector at the church, a heavy heart had he;

"Not a dry eye was around her, save the step-dame stern alone,
Who looked on with an evil smile, as from a heart of stone;

"And when the ringers rang a peal, as now they came again,
And the women whispered comfort, yet her heart seemed rent in twain.

"High in the place of honour at the marriage feast she sate,
Yet no drop of water drank she, and no crumb of bread she ate;

"And when at last, the feast being done, they would light the bride to bed,
The ring from off her hand she flung, the wreath from off her head,

"And with wild eyes that spoke despair, and locks that streamed behind,
Into the darkling night she fled, as swiftly as the wind."

V.

The lights within the castle were out, and all asleep;
Only, with fever in her brain, the maid would watch and weep.

The chamber door swung open. "Who goes there?" "Do not fear,
Gwen; 'tis I, your foster brother." "Oh! at last, my love, my dear!"

He raised her to the saddle, and his strong arm clasped her round,
As, through the night, his charger white flew on without a sound.

"How fast we go, my brother!" "'Tis a hundred leagues and more."
"How happy am I, happier than in all my life before!

"And have we far to go, brother? I would that we were come."
"Have patience, sister; hold me fast; 'tis a long way to our home."

The white owl shrieked around them, the wild things shrank in fear
As through the night a cloud of light that ghostly steed drew near.

"How swift your charger is, brother! and your armour oh, how bright!
Ah, no more you are a boy, brother, but in troth a noble knight!

"How beautiful you are, brother! but I would that we were come."
"Have patience, sister; hold me fast; we are not far from home."

"Your breath is icy-cold, brother, your locks are dank and wet;
Your heart, your hands are icy-cold; oh! is it further yet?"

"Have patience, sister; hold me fast; for we are nearly there;
Hist! hear you not our marriage bells ring through the midnight air?"

Even with the word, that ghostly steed neighed suddenly and shrill,
Then trembled once through every limb, and like a stone stood still.

* * * *

And lo, within a land they were, a land of mirth and pleasure,
Where youths and maidens hand in hand danced to a joyous measure;

A verdant orchard closed them round
with golden fruit bedight,
And above them, from the heaven-
kissed hills, came shafts of golden
light;

Hard by, a cool spring bubbled clear,
a fountain without stain,
Whereof the dead lips tasting, grew
warm with life again.

There was Gwennola's mother mild,
and eke her sisters dear:
Oh, land of joy and bliss and love!—
oh, land without a tear!

VI.

But when the next sun on the earth,
brake from the gathered gloom,
From the white church, the young
maids bore, the virgin to her
tomb.

III.

AZENOR.

"SEAMEN, seamen, tell me true,
Is there any of your crew
Who in Armor town has seen
Azenor the kneeling queen?"

"We have seen her oft indeed,
Kneeling in the self-same place;
Brave her heart, though pale her face,
White her soul, though dark her weed."

I.

Of a long-past summer's day
Envoys came from far away,
Mailed in silver, clothed with gold,
High on snorting chargers bold.

When the warder spied them near,
To the King he went, and cried,
"Twelve bold knights come pricking
here:
Shall I open to them wide?"

"Opened let the great gates be;
See the knights are welcomed all;
Spread the board and deck the hall,
We will feast them royally."

"By our Prince's high command,
Who one day shall be our King,
We come to ask a precious thing—
Azenor your daughter's hand."

"Gladly will we grant your prayer:
Brave the youth, as we have heard.
Tall is she, milkwhite and fair,
Gentle as a singing bird."

Fourteen days high feast they made,
Fourteen days of dance and song;
Till the dawn the harpers played;
Mirth and joyance all day long.

"Now, my fair spouse, it is meet
That we turn us toward our home."
"As you will, my love, my sweet;
Where you are, there I would come."

II.

When his step-dame saw the bride,
Well-nigh choked with spleen was she:
"This pale-faced girl, this lump of
pride—
And shall she be preferred to me?

"New things please men best, 'tis true,
And the old are cast aside.
Natheless, what is old and tried
Serves far better than the new."

Scarce eight months had passed away
When she to the Prince would come,
And with subtlety would say,
"Would you lose both wife and home?

"Have a care, lest what I tell
Should befall you; it were best
To have a care and guard you well,
'Ware the cuckoo in your nest."

"Madam, if the truth you tell,
Meet reward her crime shall earn,
First the round tower's straitest cell,
Then in nine days she shall burn."

III.

When the old King was aware,
Bitter tears the greybeard shed.
Tore in grief his white, white hair,
Crying, "Would God that I were dead."

And to all the seamen said,
"Good seamen, pray you tell me true,
Is there, then, any one of you
Can tell me if my child be dead?"

"My liege, as yet alive is she,
Though burned to-morrow shall she be:
But from her prison tower, O King!
Morning and eve we hear her sing.

"Morning and eve, from her fair throat
Issues the same sweet plaintive note,
'They are deceived; I kiss Thy rod:
Have pity on them, O my God!'"

IV.

Even as a lamb who gives its life
All meekly to the cruel knife,
White-robed she went, her soft feet bare,
Self-shrouded in her golden hair.

And as she to her dreadful fate
Fared on, poor innocent, meek and mild,
"Grave crime it were," cried small and great,
"To slay the mother and the child."

All wept sore, both small and great;
Only the step-dame smiling sate:
"Sure 'twere no evil deed, but good,
To kill the viper with her brood."

"Quick, good firemen, fan the fire
Till it leap forth fierce and red;
Fan it fierce as my desire:
She shall burn till she is dead."

Vain their efforts, all in vain,
Though they fanned and fanned again;
The more they blew, the embers gray
Faded and sank and died away.

When the judge the portent saw,
Dazed and sick with fear was he:
"She is a witch, she flouts the law;
Come, let us drown her in the sea."

V.

What saw you on the sea? A boat
Neither by sail nor oarsman sped;
And at the helm, to watch it float,
An angel white with wings outspread;

A little boat, far out to sea,
And with her child a fair ladye,
Whom at her breast she sheltered well,
Like a white dove upon a shell.

She kissed, and clasped, and kissed again
His little back, his little feet,
Crooning a soft and tender strain,
"Da-da, my dear; da-da, my sweet.

"Ah, could your father see you, sweet,
A proud man should he be to-day;
But we on earth may never meet,
But he is lost and far away."

VI.

In Armor town is such affright
As never castle knew before,
For at the midmost hour of night
The wicked step-dame is no more.

"I see hell open at my side:
Oh, save me, in God's name, my son!
Your spouse was chaste; 'twas I who lied;
Oh, save me, for I am undone!"

Scarce had she checked her lying tongue,
A viper from her lips would glide,
With threatening fangs, which hissed and stung,
And pierced her marrow till she died.

Eftsoons, to foreign realms the knight
Went forth, by land and over sea;
Seeking in vain his lost delight,
O'er all the round, round world went he.

He sought her East, he sought her West,
Next to the hot South sped he forth,
Then, after many a fruitless quest,
He sought her in the gusty North.

There by some nameless island vast,
His anchor o'er the side he cast;
When by a brooklet's fairy spray,
He spies a little lad at play.

Fair are his locks, and blue his eyes,
As his lost love's or as the sea;
The good knight looking on them, sighs,
"Fair child, who may thy father be?"

"Sir, I have none save Him in heaven:
Long years ago he went away,
Ere I was born, and I am seven;
My mother mourns him night and day."

"Who is thy mother, child, and where?"
"She cleanses linen white and fair,
In yon clear stream." "Come, child, and we
Together will thy mother see."

He took the youngling by the hand,
And, as they passed the yellow strand,
The child's swift blood in pulse and arm
Leapt to his father's and grew warm.

"Rise up and look, oh mother dear;
It is my father who is here:
My father who was lost is come—
Oh, bless God for it!—to his home."

They knelt and blessed His holy name,
Who is so good, and just, and mild,
Who joins the sire and wife and child;
And so to Brittany they came.

And may the blessed Trinity,
Protect all toilers on the sea!

GYCIA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PEOPLE OF BOSPHORUS.

The KING OF BOSPHORUS.
ASANDER, *Prince of Bosphorus.*
LYSIMACHUS, *a statesman.*
MEGACLES, *a chamberlain from the Imperial Court of Constantinople.*
Three Courtiers, accompanying Asander.
Soldiers, etc.

PEOPLE OF CHERSON.

LAMACHUS, *Archon of the Republic of Cherson.*
ZETHO, *his successor.*
THEODORUS, *a young noble (brother to Irene), in love with Gycia.*
BARDANES, *first Senator.*
Ambassador to Bosphorus.
The Senators of Cherson.
Two Labourers.
GYCIA, *daughter of Lamachus.*
IRENE, *a lady—her friend, in love with Asander.*
MELISSA, *an elderly lady in waiting on Gycia.*
Child, daughter of the Gaoler.
Citizens, etc.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—BOSPHORUS. THE KING'S PALACE.

The KING, *in anxious thought. To him* LYSIMACHUS, *afterwards* ASANDER.

Enter LYSIMACHUS.

Lys. What ails the King, that thus his brow is bent
By such a load of care?
King. Lysimachus,
The load of empire lies a weary weight,
On age-worn brains; tho' skies and seas may smile,
And steadfast favouring Fortune sit serene,
Guiding the helm of State, but well thou knowest—
None better in my realm—through what wild waves,
Quicksands, and rock-fanged straits, our Bosphorus,
Laden with all our love, reels madly on
To shipwreck and to ruin. From the North,
Storm-cloud on storm-cloud issuing volleys forth

Fresh thunderbolts of war. The Emperor
Dallies within his closed seraglios,
Letting his eunuchs waste the might of Rome,
While the fierce Scythian, in a surge of blood,
Bursts on our bare-swept plains. Upon the South,
Our rival Cherson, with a jealous eye,
Waits on our adverse chances, taking joy
Of her republican guile in every check
And buffet envious Fortune deals our State,
Which doth obey a King. Of all our foes
I hate and dread these chiefly, for I fear
Lest, when my crown falls from my palsied brow,
My son Asander's youth may prove too weak
To curb these crafty burghers. Speak, I pray thee,
Most trusty servant. Can thy loyal brain
Devise some scheme whereby our dear-loved realm
May break the mesh of Fate?

Lys. Indeed, my liege,
Too well I know our need, and long have tossed
Through sleepless nights, if haply I might find
Some remedy, but that which I have found
Shows worse than the disease.

King. Nay, speak; what is it?
I know how wise thy thought.

Lys. My liege, it chances
The Archon Lamachus is old and spent.
He has an only child, a daughter, Gycia.
The treasure of his age, who now blooms forth
In early maidenhood. The girl is fair
As is a morn in springtide; and her father
A king in all but name, such reverence
His citizens accord him. Were it not well
The Prince Asander should contract himself
In marriage to this girl, and take the strength
Of Cherson for her dowry, and the power
Of their strong fleets and practised arms to thrust
The invading savage backward?

King. Nay, my lord;
No more of this, I pray. There is no tribe
Of all the blighting locust-swarms of war,
Which sweep our wasted fields, I would not rather
Take to my heart and cherish than these vipers.
Dost thou forget, my lord, how of old time,
In the brave days of good Sauromatus,
These venomous townsmen, shamelessly allied
With the barbarian hosts, brought us to ruin;
Or, with the failing force of Cæsar leagued,
By subtle devilish enginery of war,
Robbed Bosphorus of its own, when, but for them,
Byzantium were our prey, and all its might,
And we Rome's masters? Nay; I swear to thee,

I would rather see the Prince dead at my feet,
I would rather see our loved State sunk and lost,
Than know my boy, the sole heir of my crown,
The sole hope of my people, taken and noosed
By this proud upstart girl. Speak not of it;
Ruin were better far.

Lys. My liege, I bear
No greater favour to these insolent townsmen
Than thou thyself. I, who have fought with them
From my first youth—who saw my father slain,
Not in fair fight, pierced through by honest steel,
But unawares, struck by some villanous engine,
Which, armed with inextinguishable fire,
Flew hissing from the walls and slew at once
Coward and brave alike; I, whose young brother,
The stripling who to me was as a son,
Taken in some sally, languished till he died,
Chained in their dungeons' depths;—must I not hate them
With hate as deep as hell? And yet I know
There is no other way than that Asander
Should wed this woman. This alone can staunch
The bleeding wounds of the State.

King. Lysimachus,
I am old; my will is weak, my body bent,
Not more than is my mind; I cannot reason.
But hark! I hear the ring of coursers' feet
Bespeak Asander coming. What an air
Of youth and morning breathes round him, and brings
A light of hope again!

Enter ASANDER *from the chase.*

Asan. My dearest sire and King, art thou thus grave
Of choice, or does our good Lysimachus,
Bringing unwonted loads of carking care,
O'ercloud thy brow? I prithee, father, fret not;
There is no cloud of care I yet have known—
And I am now a man, and have my cares—
Which the fresh breath of morn, the hungry chase,
The echoing horn, the jocund choir of tongues,
Or joy of some bold enterprise of war,
When the swift squadrons smite the echoing plains,
Scattering the stubborn spearmen, may not break,
As does the sun the mists. Nay, look not grave;
My youth is strong enough for any burden
Fortune can cast on me.

King. Couldst thou, Asander,
Consent to serve the State, if it should bid thee
Wed without love?

Asan. What, father, is that all?
I do not know this tertian fever, love,

Of which too oft my comrades groan and sigh,
This green-sick blight, which turns a lusty soldier
To a hysterical girl. Wed without love?
One day I needs must wed, though love I shall not.
And if it were indeed to serve the State,
Nay, if 'twould smooth one wrinkle from thy brow,
Why, it might be to-morrow. Tell me, father,
Who is this paragon that thou designest
Shall call me husband? Some barbarian damsel
Reared on mare's milk, and nurtured in a tent
In Scythia? Well, 'twere better than to mate
With some great lady from the Imperial Court,
Part tigress and all wanton. I care not;
Or if the scheme miscarry, I care not.
Tell me, good father.

King. Wouldst thou wed, Asander,
If 'twere to save the State, a Greek from Cherson?

Asan. From Cherson? Nay, my liege; that were too much.
A girl from out that cockatrice's den—
Take such a one to wife? I would liefer take
A viper to my breast! Nay, nay, you jest,
My father, for you hate this low-born crew,
Grown gross by huckstering ways and sordid craft—
Ay, more than I.

King. It is no jest, my son.
Our good Lysimachus will tell thee all
Our need and whence it comes.

Lys. My gracious Prince,
Thus stands the case, no otherwise. Our foes
Press closer year by year, our wide-spread plains
Are ravaged, and our bare, unpeopled fields
Breed scantier levies; while the treasury
Stands empty, and we have not means to buy
The force that might resist them. Nought but ruin,
Speedy, inevitable, can await
Our failing Bosphorus' unaided strength,
Unless some potent rich ally should join
Our weakness to her might. None other is there
To which to look but Cherson; and I know,
From trusty friends among them, that even now,
Perchance this very day, an embassy
Comes to us with design that we should sink
Our old traditional hate in the new bonds
Which Hymen binds together. For the girl
Gycia, the daughter of old Lamachus,
Their foremost man, there comes but one report—
That she is fair as good.

Asan. My lord, I pray you,
Waste not good breath. If I must sell myself,
It matters not if she be fair or foul,
Angel or doubly damned; hating the race,

Men, maidens, young and old, I would blight my life
To save my country.
King. Thanks, my dearest son.
There spake a patriot indeed.
Servant. My liege,
An embassy from Cherson for the King.

Enter Ambassador, *with retinue.*

Ambas. Sirs, I bring you a message from Lamachus, the Archon of Cherson.

Lys. Sirs, forsooth! Know ye not the dignity of princes, or does your republican rudeness bar you from all courtesy? I do not count myself equal to the King, nor, therefore should you.

King. Nay, good Lysimachus, let him proceed.

Ambas. If I am blunt of speech, I beg your forgiveness. I bring to you a letter from the citizen Lamachus, which I shall read, if it be your pleasure.

King. Read on.

Ambas. "To the King of Bosphorus, Lamachus sends greeting. We are both old. Let us forget the former enmities of our States, and make an alliance which shall protect us against the storm of barbarian invasion which Cæsar is too weak to ward off. Thou hast a son, and I a daughter. Thy son is, from all report, a brave youth and worthy. My daughter is the paragon of her sex. I have wealth and possessions and respect as great as if I were a sceptred King. The youth and the maid are of fitting age. Let us join their hands together, and with them those of our States, and grow strong enough to defy the barbarians, and Rome also."

Asan. My liege, I am willing for this marriage. Let it be.

King. My son, we have not yet heard all. Read on, sir.

Ambas. "There is one condition which not my will, but the jealousy of our people enforces, viz. that the Prince Asander, if he weds my daughter, shall thenceforth forswear his country, nor seek to return to it on pain of death. I pray thee, pardon the rudeness of my countrymen; but they are Greeks, and judge their freedom more than their lives."

Asan. Insolent hounds!
This is too much. I will have none of them.
Take back that message.
King. Thou art right, my son.
I could not bear to lose thee, not to win
A thousand Chersons. Let us fight alone,
And see what fortune sends us.
Lys. Good my liege,
Be not too hasty. (*To* Ambassador) Sir, the King has heard
The message which you bring, and presently
Will send a fitting answer. [*Exit* Ambassador.
Nay, my liege,
I beg your patience. That these fellows make
Their friendship difficult is true; but think
How great the value of it, and remember
How easy 'tis to promise and break faith
With insolent dogs like these. This Lamachus
Is older than your grace, and feebler far.

He will not live for ever, and, he gone,
Will not the Prince Asander be as great,
The husband of his daughter and his heir,
As *he* is now, and sway the power of Cherson
For our own ends, and cast to all the winds
This foul enforcèd compact, and o'erturn
This commonwealth of curs? I will stake my life
That three years shall not pass ere he is King
Of Cherson in possession, and at once
Of Bosphorus next heir.
"The tongue hath sworn, the mind remains unsworn,"
So says their poet.

Asan. I'll have none of it.
I am not all Greek, but part Cimmerian,
And scorn to break my word.'
Let us face ruin, father, not deceit.

King. My noble son, I love thee.

Lys. Good, my liege,
And thou, my Lord Asander, ponder it.
Consider our poor country's gaping wounds,
And what a remedy lies to our hands.
I will die willingly if I devise not
A scheme to bend these upstarts to your will. [*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE II.—Outside the Palace.

Megacles *and* Courtiers.

Meg. Well, my lords, and so it is all settled. We must all be on board in half an hour. His Altitude the Prince sails at once for Cherson, and with a view to his immediate marriage. Was ever such a rash step heard of? Not twenty-four hours to get ready the marriage equipment of a Prince of Bosphorus. Well, well, I dare say they would be glad enough to take him with no rag to his back. I dare say these rascally republicans would know no better if he were to be married in his everyday suit.

1st Court. I' faith, I should never have dreamt it. Asander, who is the boldest huntsman and the bravest soldier, and the best of good fellows, to go and tie himself to the apron-string of a Greek girl, a tradesman's daughter from Cherson, of all places on earth! Pah! it makes me sick!

2nd Court. But I hear she is beautiful as Artemis, and—— Well, we are all young or have been, and beauty is a strong loadstone to such metal as the Prince's.

3rd Court. Nay, he has never set eyes on her; and, for that matter, the Lady Irene was handsome enough, in all conscience, and a jovial young gentlewoman to boot. Ye gods! do you mind how she sighed for him and pursued him? It was a sight to please the goddess Aphrodite herself. But then, our good Asander, who had only to lift up his little finger, was so cold and positively forbidding, that I once came upon the poor lady crying her eyes out in a passion of mortified feeling.

1st Court. Ay, she was from this outlandish Cherson, was not she? Aphrodite was a Greek woman also, remember.

2nd Court. So she was. I had quite forgotten where the lady came

from. Well, if she is there now, and cannot get her Prince, and would like a gay, tolerably well-favoured young fellow for a lover, I suppose she need go no further than the present company.

Meg. My lords, I pray you leave these frivolities, and let us come to serious matters. Think, I beg you, in what a painful position I am placed. I am to go, without proper notice, as Master of the Ceremonies of the Court of Bosphorus, to conduct an important Court-ceremonial with a pack of scurvy knaves, who, I will be bound, hardly know the difference between an Illustrious and a Respectable, or a Respectable and an Honourable. I must do my best to arrange all decently and in order, and as near as may be to the Imperial model, and all these matters I have to devise on shipboard, tossed about on that villanous Euxine, with a smell of pitch everywhere, and seasickness in my stomach. And when I get to Cherson, if ever I do get there alive, I have not the faintest idea whom I am to consult with—whether there is a Count of the Palace or anybody, in fact. I dare say there is nobody; I am sure there is nobody. A marriage of the heir apparent is a very serious affair, let me tell you. What a comfort it is that I have got the last edition of that precious work of the divine Theodosius on Dignities! If it were not for that, I should go mad.

1st Court. My good Megacles, I warn you the Prince cares as little for etiquette as he does for love-making.

Meg. Very likely, and that makes my position so difficult. Just reflect for a moment. When we go ashore at Cherson, I suppose we shall be received by the authorities?

2nd Court. Surely, good Megacles.

Meg. Then, how many steps should Prince Asander take to meet his father-in-law Lamachus—eh? And how many steps should Lamachus take? You never gave the matter a thought? Of course not. And these are questions to be settled on the spot, and scores like them.

3rd Court. I dare say it won't matter at all, or very little.

Meg. Matter very little, indeed! very little, forsooth! Why, in the name of all the saints, do not alliances fall through for less? Are not bloody wars fought for less? Do I not remember the sad plight of the Grand Chamberlain, when the Illustrious Leo, the Pro-Consul of Macedonia, had a meeting at Court with the Respectable the Vice-Prefect of Pannonia? Now, the Pro-Consul should have taken four steps forward, as being the most noble, the Vice-Prefect five. But, the Vice-Prefect being a tall man, and the Pro-Consul a short one, the Grand Chamberlain did not sufficiently measure their distances; and so when they had taken but four steps each, there were the two Dignitaries bolt upright, face to face, glaring at each other, and no room to take the fraction of a foot pace more.

1st Court. Faith, a very laughable situation, good Megacles. Was it hard to settle!

Meg. I should think it was hard to settle. No one could interfere; the Book of Ceremonies was sent for, and was silent. There was nothing for it but that the Emperor, after half an

hour, broke up the Court in confusion, and those two remained where they were till it was quite dark, and then they got away, no one knows how. But what came of it? For fifteen years there was war and bloodshed between the provinces, and but for the invasion of the Goths, there would be to this day. Matter little, indeed! Why, you foolish youngster, ceremony is everything in life. To understand Precedence aright is to know the secrets of nature. The order of Precedence is the order of Creation. It is, in fact, a very cosmogony. Oh, a noble science! a noble science!

1st Court. Right, good Megacles, to magnify your office. Bravery is nothing; goodness is nothing; beauty is a foolish dream. Give us Ceremony, Ceremony, more Ceremony; it is the salt of life.

Meg. A very intelligent youth. But here comes the King.

Enter the KING, ASANDER, *and* LYSIMACHUS.

Asan. My liege, I do your will,
Though with a heavy heart. Farewell, my father.
If I must bid farewell to this dear City,
Which nourished me from childhood, 'tis to save it,
Not otherwise, and thou my sire and King.
From thee I do not part, and oftentimes,
If the saints will, I yet shall welcome thee,
When all our foes are routed and our troubles
Fled like some passing storm-cloud, to my hearth,
And set thy heir upon thy knees, a Prince
Of Bosphorus and Cherson.
King. Good, my son,
I pray God keep you, for I dimly fear,
So dark a presage doth obscure my mind,
That we shall meet no more.
Lys. My honoured liege,
These are the figments of a mind which grief
Hath part disordered. Thou shalt see thy son,
Trust me for it; I swear it. One thing more
Remains. I know what 'tis to be a youth
As yet untouched by love; I know what charm
Lies in the magic of a woman's eyes
For a young virgin heart. I pray you, sir,
Swear to me by the saints, that, come what may,
For no allurement which thy new life brings thee,
The love of wife or child, wilt thou forget
Our Bosphorus, but still wilt hold her weal
Above all other objects of thy love
In good or adverse fortune.
Asan. Nay, my lord,
There is no need for oaths; yet will I swear it,
Here on this soldier's cross.
[*Makes a cross with the hilt of his sword.*
Farewell, my father,
I mar my manhood, staying.
King. Farewell, son.
Let my old eyes fix on thee till thou goest

Beneath the farthest verge. Good Megacles,
And you brave gentlemen, be faithful all
To me and to your Prince.
Lys. My Lord Asander,
Remember!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—LAMACHUS' PALACE, CHERSON.

GYCIA *and* IRENE.

Gycia. Sweetest Irene,
What joy it is to see thee once again
After so long an absence! We had grown
Together on one stalk so long, since first
Our girlish lives began to burst to flower,
That it was hard to part us. But methinks
That something of the rose from off thy cheek
Has faded, and its rounded outline fair
Seems grown a little thinner.
Ire. Gycia,
The flower, once severed from the stalk, no more
Grows as before.
Gycia. Thou strange girl, to put on
Such grave airs! Ah! I fear at Bosphorus
Some gay knight has bewitched thee; thou has fallen
In love, as girls say—though what it may be
To fall in love, I know not, thank the gods,
Having much else to think of.
Ire. Prithee, dear,
Speak not of this.
Gycia. Ah! then I know 'tis true.
Confess what manner of thing love is.
Ire. Nay, nay, I cannot tell thee (*weeping*), Gycia;
Thou knowest not what thou askest. What is love?
Seek not to know it. 'Tis to be no more
Thy own, but all another's; 'tis to dwell
By day and night on one fixed madding thought,
Till the form wastes, and with the form the heart
Is warped from right to wrong, and can forget
All that it loved before, faith, duty, country,
Friendship, affection—everything but love.
Seek not to know it, dear; or, knowing it,
Be happier than I.
Gycia. My poor Irene!
Then, 'tis indeed a misery to love.
I do repent that I have tortured thee
By such unthinking jests. Forgive me, dear,
I will speak no more of it; with me thy secret
Is safe as with a sister. Shouldst thou wish
To unburden to me thy unhappy heart,
If haply I might bring thy love to thee.
Thou shalt his name divulge and quality,
And I will do my best.
Ire. Never, dear Gycia.
Forget my weakness; 'twas a passing folly,
I love a man who loves me not again,

And that is very hell. I would die sooner
Than breathe his name to thee. Farewell, dear lady!
Thou canst not aid me. [*Exit* IRENE.
Gycia. Hapless girl! Praise Heaven
That I am fancy-free!

Enter LAMACHUS.

Lama. My dearest daughter, why this solemn aspect?
I have glad news for thee. Thou knowest of old
The weary jealousies, the bloody feuds,
Which 'twixt our Cherson and her neighbour City
Have raged ere I was born—nay, ere my grandsire
First saw the light of heaven. Both our States
Are crippled by this brainless enmity.
And now the Empire, now the Scythian, threatens
Destruction to our Cities, whom, united,
We might defy with scorn. Seeing this weakness,
Thy father, wishful, ere his race be run,
To save our much-loved Cherson, sent of late
Politic envoys to our former foe,
And now—i' faith, I am not so old, 'twould seem
That I have lost my state-craft—comes a message.
The Prince Asander, heir of Bosphorus,
Touches our shores to-day, and presently
Will be with us.

Gycia. Oh, father, is it wise?
Do fire and water mingle? Does the hawk
Mate with the dove; the tiger with the lamb;
The tyrant with the peaceful commonwealth;
Fair commerce with the unfruitful works of war?
What union can there be 'twixt our fair city
And this half-barbarous race? 'Twere against nature
To bid these opposite elements combine—
The Greek with the Cimmerian. Father, pray you,
Send them away, with honour if you please,
And soothing words and gifts—only, I pray you,
Send them away, this Prince who doth despise us,
And his false retinue of slaves.
Lama. My daughter,
Thy words are wanting in thy wonted love
And dutiful observance. 'Twere an insult
Unwashed by streams of bloodshed, should our City
Scorn thus the guests it summoned. Come they must,
And with all hospitable care and honour,
Else were thy sire dishonoured. Thou wilt give them
A fitting welcome.
Gycia. Pardon me, my father
That I spoke rashly. I obey thy will
[*Going*
Lama. Stay, Gycia. Dost thou know what 'tis to love?

Gycia. Ay, thee, dear father.
Lama. Nay, I know it well.
But has no noble youth e'er touched thy heart?
Gycia. None, father, Heaven be praised! The young Irene
Was with me when thou cam'st, and all her life
Seems blighted by this curse of love—for one
Whose name she hides, with whom in Bosphorus
She met, when there she sojourned. Her young brother,
The noble Theodorus, whom thou knowest,
Lets all the world go by him and grows pale
For love, and pines, and wherefore?—For thy daughter,
Who knows not what love means, and cannot brook
Such brain-sick folly. Nay, be sure, good father,
I love not thus, and shall not.
Lama. Well, well, girl,
Thou wilt know it yet. I fetter not thy choice,
But if thou couldst by loving bind together
Not two hearts only, but opposing peoples;
Supplant by halcyon days long years of strife,
And link them in unbroken harmony;—
Were this no glory for a woman, this
No worthy price of her heart?
Gycia. Tell me, I pray,
What mean you by this riddle?
Lama. Prince Asander
Comes here to ask your hand, and with it take
A gracious dower of peace and amity.
He does not ask thee to forsake thy home,
But leaves for thee his own. All tongues together
Are full of praise of him: virgin in love,
A brave youth in the field, as we have proved
In many a mortal fight; a face and form
Like a young god's. I would, my love, thy heart
Might turn to him, and find thy happiness
In that which makes me happy. I am old
And failing, and I fain would see thee blest
Before I die, and at thy knees an heir
To all my riches, and the State of Cherson
From anxious cares delivered, and through thee.
Gycia. Father, we are of the Athenian race,
Which was the flower of Hellas. Ours the fame
Of Poets, Statesmen, Orators, whose works
And thoughts upon the forehead of mankind
Shine like a precious jewel; ours the glory
Of those great Soldiers who by sea and land
Scattered the foemen to the winds of heaven,
First in the files of time. And though our mother,
Our Athens, sank, crushed by the might of Rome,
What is Rome now?—An Empire rent in twain;
An Empire sinking 'neath the unwieldy weight

Of its own power; an Empire where the Senate
Ranks lower than the Circus, and a wanton
Degrades the Imperial throne. But though to its fall
The monster totters, this our Cherson keeps
The bravery of old, and still maintains
The old Hellenic spirit and some likeness
Of the fair Commonwealth which ruled the world.
Surely, my father, 'tis a glorious spring
Drawn from the heaven-kissed summits whence we come;
And shall we, then, defile our noble blood
By mixture with this upstart tyranny
Which fouls the Hellenic pureness of its source
In countless bastard channels? If our State
Ask of its children sacrifice, 'tis well.
It shall be given; only I prithee, father,
Seek not that I should with barbaric blood
Taint the pure stream, which flows from Pericles.
Let me abide unwedded, if I may,
A Greek girl as before.

Lama. Daughter, thy choice
Is free as air to accept or to reject
This suitor; only, in the name of Cherson,
Do nothing rashly, and meanwhile take care
That nought that fits a Grecian State be wanting
To do him honour.

Gycia. Sir, it shall be done.

SCENE II.—OUTSIDE THE PALACE OF LAMACHUS.

MEGACLES *and* COURTIERS.

Meg. Well, my lords, and so this is the palace. A grand palace, forsooth, and a fine reception to match! Why, these people are worse than barbarians. They are worse than the sea, and that was inhospitable enough. The saints be praised that that is over, at any rate. Oh, the intolerable scent of pitch, and the tossing and the heaving! Heaven spare me such an ordeal again! I thought I should have died of the smells. And here, can it be? Is it possible that there is a distinct odour of—pah! what? Oils, as I am a Christian, and close to the very palace of the Archon! What a detestable people! Some civet, good friends, some civet!

1st Court. Here it is, good Megacles. You did not hope, surely, to find republicans as sweet as those who live cleanly under a King? But here are some of their precious citizens at last.

Enter CITIZENS *hurriedly.*

1st Citizen. I pray you, forgive us, gentlemen. We thought the Prince would take the land at the other quay and had prepared our welcome accordingly.

Meg. Who are these men?

1st Court. They are honourable citizens of Cherson.

Meg. Citizens! They will not do for me. The Count of the Palace should be here with the Grand Chamberlain to meet my Master.

1st Cit. Your Master? Oh! then you are a serving man, as it were?

seem. Well, my good man, when comes your Master?

Meg. Oh, the impertinent scoundrel! Do you know, sir, who I am?

1st Cit. Probably the Prince's attendant, his lackey, or possibly his steward. I neither know nor care.

Meg. Oh, you barbarian! Where is the Count of the Palace, I say?

1st Cit. Now, citizen, cease this nonsense. We have not, thank Heaven, any such foolish effeminate functionary.

Meg. No Count of the Palace? Heavens! what a crew! Well, if there is none, where are your leading nobles? where the Respectable and Illustrious? You are certainly not Illustrious nor Respectable; you probably are not even Honourable, or if you are you don't look it.

1st Cit. What, you wretched popinjay of a serving man! You dare address a Greek citizen in that way? Take that, and that! [*Beats him.*

1st Court. Draw, gentlemen! These are ruffians! [*They fight.*

Enter ASANDER.

Asan. Put up your swords, gentlemen. Why, fellows, what is this? Is this your hospitality to your guests?

1st Cit. Nay, sir; but this servant of yours has been most insolent, and has abused and insulted our State and its manners. He told us that we were not men of honour; and some of us, sir, are young, and have hot blood, and, as Greek citizens of Cherson, will not bear insults.

Asan. Insolent upstarts, you are not worthy of our swords! Come, my Lord Megacles, heed them not. Here is their master.

Enter LAMACHUS *and* Senators.

Lama. We bid you heartfelt welcome, Prince, to Cherson.
That we have seemed to fail to do you honour
Comes of the spite of fortune. For your highness,
Taking the land at the entrance of the port,
Missed what of scanty pomp our homely manners
Would fain have offered; but we pray you think
'Twas an untoward accident, no more.
Welcome to Cherson, Prince!

Asan. Methinks, my lord,
Scarce in the meanest State is it the custom
To ask the presence of a noble guest
With much insistance, and when he accepts
The summons, and has come, to set on him
With insolent dogs like these.

Lama. Nay, Prince, I pray you,
What is it that has been?

Asan. Our chamberlain
Was lately, in your absence, which your highness
So glibly doth excuse, set on and beaten
By these dogs here.

Lama. Nay, sir, they are not dogs,
But citizens of honour; yet indeed
Wanting, I fear, in that deep courtesy
Which from a stranger and a guest refuses
To take provoked offence. My lord, indeed
I am ashamed that citizens of Cherson
Should act so mean a part. Come, Prince, I pray you
Forget this matter, and be sure your coming

Fills me with joy. Go, tell the Lady Gycia
The Prince is safe in Cherson.

Enter GYCIA, IRENE, MELISSA, *and* Ladies. IRENE, *seeing* ASANDER, *faints, and is withdrawn,* GYCIA *supporting her. Confusion.*

Meg. My Lord Asander, remember what is due to yourself and Bosphorus. Remember, when this merchant's daughter comes, you *must* not treat her as an equal. Courtesy to a woman is all very well, but rank has greater claims still, especially when you have to deal with such people as these. Now, remember, you must make *no* obeisance at all; and if you advance to meet her more than one step, you are lost for ever. These are the truly important things.

Asan. Good Megacles,
Forewarned I am forearmed.
(*Aside*) Thou fluent trickster!
Fit head of such a State! I would to Heaven
I had never come!

Re-enter GYCIA.

Nay, nay, I thank the saints
That I have come. Who is this peerless creature?
Is this the old man's daughter?

Lama. Prince Asander,
This is my daughter, Gycia. Of the prince
Thou hast heard many a time, my daughter.

Gycia (*confused*). Ay!—
Indeed I——

Lama. Come, my girl, thou art not used
To fail of words.

Asan. Nay, sir, I pray you press her not to speak.
And yet I fain would hear her. Artemis
Showed not so fair, nor with a softer charm
Came Hebe's voice.

Gycia. Nay, sir, I did not know
A soldier could thus use a courtier's tongue.

Asan. If being bred in courts would give me power
To put my thought in words, then would I fain
Be courtier for thy sake.

Gycia. Ah, sir, you jest.
The ways of courts we know not, but I bid thee
Good welcome to our city, and I prithee
Command whatever service our poor Cherson
Can give whilst thou art here. (*To* MEGACLES) Pray you my lord,
Accompany his Highness and our household
To the poor chambers which our homely state
Allots for him. They are but poor, I know,
For one who lives the stately life of kings;
But such as our scant means can reach they are.

Meg. My lady, I have lived long time in courts,
But never, in the palaces of Rome,
Have I seen beauty such as yours, or grace
More worthy of a crown. (*To* MELISSA) To you, my lady,
I bow with most respectful homage. Surely
The goddess Heré has not left the earth

While you are here. I humbly take my leave
For the present of your Highness with a thousand
Obeisances, and to your gracious father
Humbly I bend the knee. My Lord Asander,
I do attend your Highness.
Mel. What a man!
What noble manners! What a polished air!
How poor to such a courtier our rude Court
And humble manners show!
Asan. Good Megacles,
Get me to my chamber—quick, ere I o'erpass
All reasonable limits. I am sped;
I am myself no more.
Lama. Farewell awhile.
We will welcome you at supper.
[*Exeunt all but* LAMACHUS *and* GYCIA.
Lama. Well, my daughter,
What think you of this hot-brained youth? I' faith,
I like his soldier's bluntness, and he seemed
To be a little startled, as I thought,
By something which he saw when thou didst come.
Perchance it was the charm of one who came
Among thy ladies took him.
Gycia. Nay, my father,
think not so indeed.
Lama. Ah! well, I am old,
And age forgets. But this I tell thee, daughter:
If in my youth I had seen a young man's gaze
Grow troubled, and he should start, and his cheek pale,
A young girl drawing near, I had almost thought
Him suddenly in love.
Gycia. Oh, nay indeed!
Who should be favoured thus? There is no woman
In our poor Cherson worthy that his gaze
Might rest on her a moment.
Lama. Ah, my girl,
Is it thus with thee? They say that love is blind,
And thou art blind, therefore it may be, Gycia,
That thou too art in love. Tell me how it is.
Couldst thou love this man, if he loved thee?
Gycia (*throwing herself on her father's neck*). Father!
Lama. Say no more, girl. I am not so old as yet
That I have quite forgotten my own youth,
When I was young and loved; and if I err not,
I read love's fluttering signals on thy cheek,
And in his tell-tale eyes. But listen! Music!
We must prepare for supper with our guests.

SCENE III.—A STREET IN CHERSON.

MEGACLES; *afterwards* MELISSA.

Megacles. Well, it is time for the banquet. Somehow, this place improves on acquaintance, after all. Poor, of course, and rude to a degree. But truly the Lady Gycia is fair—as fair,

indeed, as if she was the Emperor's daughter. She is a beautiful creature, truly. But give *me* that delightful lady-in-waiting of hers, the Lady Melissa. What grace! what rounded proportions! I like mature beauty. She is as like the late divine Empress as two peas, and I thought—I dare say I was wrong, but I really thought—I made an impression. Poor things! poor things! They can't help themselves. We courtiers really ought to be very careful not to abuse our power. It is positive cruelty. The contest is too unequal. It makes one inclined sometimes to put on the manners of a clown, so as to give them a chance. Nay, nay, you might as well ask the Ethiopian to change his skin as a courtier his fine manners. By all the saints! here she comes in *propriâ personâ*.

Enter the LADY MELISSA.

Mel. Heavens! it is the strange nobleman. I am sure I am all of a flutter.

Meg. (*advancing with formal bows*). My lady, I am enchanted (*bows again; then takes several steps to the right, then to the left, and bows*). What a wonderful good fortune! Ever since I had the honour to see you just now, I have only lived in the hope of seeing you again.

Mel. (*curtsying*). Oh, my lord, you great courtiers can find little to interest you in our poor little Court and its humble surroundings.

Meg. Madam, I beg! not a word! I was just thinking that you exactly resembled the late divine Empress.

Mel. Oh, my lord, forbear! The Empress! and I have never been out of Cherson! You flatter me, you flatter me, indeed. That is the way with all you courtiers from Constantinople. Now, if you had said that my Lady Gycia was beautiful——

Meg. My dear lady, I do not admire her in the least. She has no manners, really—nothing, at any rate, to attract a man of the great world; a mere undeveloped girl, with all the passion to come. No, no, my good lady, give me a woman who has lived. We courtiers know manners and breeding when we see them, and yours are simply perfect, not to say Imperial.

Mel. What a magnificent nature! Well, to say the truth, the Lady Gycia is not at all to my taste. It is a cold, insipid style of beauty, at the best; and she is as self-willed and as straitlaced as a lady abbess. I suppose she is well matched with the Prince Asander?

Meg. Well, he is a handsome lad enough, and virtuous, but weak, as youth always is, and pliable. Now, for myself, I am happy to say I am steadfast and firm as a rock.

Mel. Ah, my lord, if all women saw with my eyes, there would not be such a run after youth. Give me a mature man, who has seen the world and knows something of life and manners.

Meg. What an intelligent creature! Madam, your sentiments do you credit. I beg leave to lay at your feet the assurance of my entire devotion.

Mel. Oh, my lord, you are too good! Why, what a dear, condescending creature!—the manners of a Grand Chamberlain and the features of an Apollo!

Meg. Permit me to enrol myself among the ranks of your humble slaves and admirers (*kneels and kisses her*

hand). But hark! the music, and I must marshal the guests to the banquet. Permit me to marshal you.

[*Exeunt with measured steps.*

SCENE IV.—THE GARDEN WITHOUT THE BANQUETING-ROOM. MOONLIGHT. THE SEA IN THE DISTANCE, WITH THE HARBOUR.

ASANDER *and* GYCIA *descend the steps of the palace slowly together. Music heard from within the hall.*

Asan. Come, Gycia, let us take the soft sweet air
Beneath the star of love. The festive lights
Still burn within the hall, where late we twain
Troth-plighted sate, and I from out thine eyes
Drank long, deep draughts of love stronger than wine.
And still the minstrels sound their dulcet strains,
Which then I heard not, since my ears were filled
With the sweet music of thy voice. My sweet,
How blest it is, left thus alone with love,
To hear the love-lorn nightingales complain
Beneath the star-gemmed heavens, and drink cool airs
Fresh from the summer sea! There sleeps the main
Which once I crossed unwilling. Was it years since,
In some old vanished life, or yesterday?
When saw I last my father and the shores
Of Bosphorus? Was it days since, or years,
Tell me, thou fair enchantress, who hast wove
So strong a spell around me?

Gycia. Nay, my lord;
Tell thou me first what magic 'tis hath turned
A woman who had scoffed so long at love
Until to-day—to-day, whose blessed night
Is hung so thick with stars—to feel as I,
That I have found the twin life which the gods
Retained when mine was fashioned, and must turn
To what so late was strange, as the flower turns
To the sun; ay, though he withers her, or clouds
Come 'twixt her and her light, turns still to him,
And only gazing lives.

Asan. Thou perfect woman!
And art thou, then, all mine? What have I done,
What have I been, that thus the favouring gods
And the consentient strength of hostile States
Conspire to make me happy? Ah! I fear,
Lest too great happiness be but a snare
Set for our feet by Fate, to take us fast
And then despoil our lives.

Gycia. My love, fear not.
We have found each other, and no power has strength
To put our lives asunder.

Asan. Thu I seal
Our contract with a kiss. [*Kisses her.*

Gycia. Oh, happiness!
To love and to be loved! And yet methinks
Love is not always thus. To some he brings
Deep disappointment only, and the pain
Of melancholy years. I have a lady
Who loves, but is unloved. Poor soul! she lives
A weary life. Some youth of Bosphorus
Stole her poor heart.
Asan. Of Bosphorus saidst thou?
And her name is?
Gycia. Irene. Didst thou know her?
Asan. Nay, love, or if I did I have forgot her.
Gycia. Poor soul! to-day when first we met, she saw
Her lover 'midst thy train and swooned away.
Asan. Poor heart! This shall be seen to. Tell me, Gycia,
Didst love me at first sight?
Gycia. Unreasonable,
To bid me tell what well thou knowest already.
Thou know'st I did. And when did love take thee?
Asan. I was wrapt up in spleen and haughty pride,
When, looking up, a great contentment took me,
Shed from thy gracious eyes. Nought else I saw,
Than thy dear self.
Gycia. And hadst thou ever loved?
Asan. Never, dear Gycia.
I have been so rapt in warlike enterprises
Or in the nimble chase, all my youth long,
That never had I looked upon a woman
With thought of love before, though it may be
That some had thought of me, being a Prince
And heir of Bosphorus.
Gycia. Not for thyself;
That could not be. Deceiver!
Asan. Nay, indeed!
Gycia. Oh, thou dear youth!
Asan. I weary for the day
When we our mutual love shall crown with marriage.
Gycia. Not yet, my love, we are so happy now.
Asan. But happier then, dear Gycia.
Gycia. Nay, I know not
If I could bear it and live. But hark, my love!
The music ceases, and the sated guests
Will soon be sped. Thou must resume thy place
Of honour for a little. I must go,
If my reluctant feet will bear me hence,
To dream of thee the livelong night. Farewell,
Farewell till morning. All the saints of heaven
Have thee in keeping!
Asan. Go not yet, my sweet;
And yet I bid thee go. Upon thy lip
I set love's seal, thus, thus.
[*Kisses her. They embrace.*
Good night!
Gycia. Good night!
[*Exit* GYCIA.

Enter IRENE *unperceived.*

Asan. Ah, sweetest, best of women! paragon

Of all thy sex, since first thy ancestress
Helen, the curse of cities and of men,
Marshalled the hosts of Greece! But she brought discord;
Thou, by thy all-compelling sweetness, peace
And harmony for strife. What have I done,
I a rough soldier, like a thousand others
Upon our widespread plains, to have won this flower
Of womanhood—this jewel for the front
Of knightly pride to wear, and, wearing it,
Let all things else go by? To think that I,
Fool that I was, only a few hours since,
Bemoaned the lot which brought me here and bade me
Leave my own land, which now sinks fathoms deep
Beyond my memory's depths, and scarce would deign
To obey thee, best of fathers, when thy wisdom
Designed to make me blest! Was ever woman
So gracious and so comely? And I scorned her
For her Greek blood and love of liberty!
Fool! purblind fool! there is no other like her;
I glory being her slave.

Irene. I pray you, pardon me, my Lord Asander.
I seek the Lady Gycia; is she here?

Asan. No, madam; she has gone, and with her taken
The glory of the night. But thou dost love her—
Is it not so, fair lady?

Ire. Ay, my lord,
For we have lived together all our lives;
I could not choose but love.

Asan. Well said indeed.
Tell me, and have I seen thy face before?
A something in it haunts me.

Ire. Ay, my lord.
Am I forgot so soon?

Asan. Indeed! Thy name?
Where have I seen thee?

Ire. Where? Dost thou, then, ask?

Asan. Ay; in good truth, my treacherous memory
Betrays me here.

Ire. Thou mayest well forget
My name, if thou hast quite forgot its owner. [*Weeps.*
I am called Irene.

Asan. Strange! the very name
My lady did relate to me as hers
Who bears a hopeless love. Weep not, good lady;
Take comfort. Heaven is kind.

Ire. Nay, my good lord,
What comfort? He I love loves not again,
Or not me, but another.

Asan. Ah, poor lady!
I pity you indeed, now I have known
True recompense of love.

Ire. Dost thou say pity?
And pity as they tell's akin to love.
What comfort is for me, my Lord Asander,
Who love one so exalted in estate
That all return of honourable love
Were hopeless, as if I should dare to raise
My eyes to Cæsar's self? What comfort have I,
If lately I have heard this man I love

Communing with his soul, when none seemed near,
Betray a heart flung prostrate at the feet
Of another, not myself; and well I know
Not Lethe's waters can wash out remembrance
Of that o'ermastering passion—naught but death
Or hopeless depths of crime?

Asan. Lady, I pity
Thy case, and pray thy love may meet return.

Ire. Then wilt thou be the suppliant to thyself,
And willing love's requital, Oh, requite it!
Thou art my love, Asander—thou, none other.
There is naught I would not face, if I might win thee.
That I a woman should lay bare my soul;
Disclose the virgin secrets of my heart
To one who loves me not, and doth despise
The service I would tender!

Asan. Cease, I pray you;
These are distempered words.

Ire. Nay, they are true,
And come from the inner heart. Leave these strange shores
And her you love. I know her from a child.
She is too high and cold for mortal love;
Too wrapt in duty, and high thoughts of State,
Artemis and Athené fused in one,
Ever to throw her life and maiden shame
As I do at thy feet. [*Kneels.*

Asan. Rise, lady, rise;
I am not worthy such devotion.

Ire. Take me
Over seas; I care not where. I'll be thy slave,
Thy sea-boy; follow thee, ill-housed, disguised,
Through hardship and through peril, so I see
Thy face sometimes, and hear sometimes thy voice,
For I am sick with love.

Asan. Lady, I prithee
Forget these wild words. I were less than man
Should I remember them, or take the gift
Which 'tis not reason offers. I knew not
Thy passion nor its object, nor am free
To take it, for the vision of my soul
Has looked upon its sun, and turns no more
To any lower light.

Ire. My Lord Asander,
She is not for thee; she cannot make thee happy,
Nor thou her. Oh, believe me! I am full
Of boding thoughts of the sure fatal day
Which shall dissolve in blood the bonds which love
To-day has plighted. If thou wilt not take me,
Then 'get thee gone alone. I see a fire
Which burns more fierce than love, and it consumes thee.
Fly with me, or alone, but fly.

Asan. Irene,
Passion distracts thy brain. I pray you, seek

Some mutual love as I. My heart is fixed,
And gone beyond recall. [*Exit.*

Enter THEODORUS *unseen.*

Ire. (*weeping passionately*). Disgraced! betrayed!
Rejected! All the madness of my love
Flung back upon me, as one spurns a gift
Who scorns the giver. That I love him still,
And cannot hate her who has robbed me of him!
I shall go mad with shame!
Theo. Great Heaven! sister,
What words are these I hear? My father's daughter
Confessing to her shame! [IRENE *weeps*
Come, tell me, woman;
I am thy brother and protector, tell me
What mean these words?
Ire. Nay, nay, I cannot, brother.
They mean not what they seem, indeed they do not.
Theo. They mean not what they seem! Thou hast been long
In Bosphorus, and oftimes at the Court
Hast seen the Prince. When he to-day comes hither,
Thou swoonest at the sight. I, seeking thee,
Find thee at night alone, he having left thee,
Lamenting for thy shame. Wouldst have me credit
Thy innocence? Speak, if thou hast a word
To balance proofs like these, or let thy silence
Condemn thee.

Ire. (*after a pause, and slowly, as if calculating consequences*). Then do I keep silence, brother,
And let thy vengeance fall.
Theo. Oh, long-dead mother,
Who now art with the saints, shut fast thy ears
Against thy daughter's shame! These are the things
That make it pain to live: all precious gifts,
Honour, observance, virtue, flung away
For one o'ermastering passiôn. Why are we
Above the brute so far, if we keep still
The weakness of the brute? Go from my sight,
Thou vile, degraded wretch. For him whose craft
And wickedness has wronged thee, this I swear—
I will kill him, if I can, or he shall me.
I will call on him to draw, and make my sword
Red with a villain's blood.
Ire. (*eagerly*). Nay, nay, my brother,
That would proclaim my shame; and shouldst thou slay him,
Thou wouldst break thy lady's heart.
Theo. Doth she so love him?
Ire. Ay, passionately, brother.
Theo. Oh, just Heaven!
And oh, confusèd world!
How are we fettered here! I may not kill
A villain who has done my sister wrong,
Since she I love has given her heart to him,
And hangs upon his life. I would not pain

My Gycia with the smallest, feeblest pang
That wrings a childish heart, for all the world.
How, then, to kill her love, though killing him
Would rid the world of a villain, and would leave
My lady free to love? 'Twere not love's part
To pain her thus, not for the wealth and power
Of all the world heaped up. I tell thee, sister,
Thy paramour is safe—I will not seek
To do him hurt; but thou shalt go to-night
To my Bithynian castle. Haply thence,
After long penances and recluse days,
Thou mayst return, and I may bear once more
To see my sister's face.

Ire. Farewell, my brother!
I do obey; I bide occasion, waiting
For what the years may bring.

Theo. Repent thy sin.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—CHERSON, TWO YEARS AFTER. THE PALACE OF LAMACHUS.

ASANDER *and* GYCIA.

Gycia. What day is this, Asander? Canst thou tell me?

Asan. Not I, my love. All days are now alike;
The weeks fleet by, the days equivalent gems
Strung on a golden thread.

Gycia. Thou careless darling!
I did not ask thee of the calendar.
Dost think a merchant's daughter knows not that?
Nay, nay; I only asked thee if thou knewest
If aught upon this day had ever brought
Some great change to thee.

Asan. Sweetest, dearest wife,
Our marriage! Thinkest thou I should forget,
Ay, though the chills of age had froze my brain,
That day of all my life?

Gycia. Dost thou regret it?
I *think* thou dost not, but 'tis sweet to hear
The avowal from thy lips?

Asan. Nay, never a moment.
And thou?

Gycia. Nay, never for a passing thought.
I did not know what life was till I knew thee.
Dost thou remember it, how I came forth,
Looking incuriously to see the stranger,
And lo! I spied my love, and could not murmur
A word of courtesy?

Asan. Dost thou remember
How I, a feverish and hot-brained youth,
Full of rash pride and princely arrogance,
Lifted my eyes and saw a goddess coming——

Gycia. Nay, a weak woman only.

Asan. And was tamed
By the first glance?

Gycia. What! are we lovers still,
After two years of marriage?

Asan. Is it two years,
Or twenty? By my faith, I know not which,

For happy lives glide on like seaward streams
Which keep their peaceful and unruffled course
So smoothly that the voyager hardly notes
The progress of the tide. Ay, two years 'tis,
And now it seems a day, now twenty years,
But always, always happy.
[*Embraces* GYCIA.
Gycia. Yet, my love,
We have known trials too. My honoured sire
Has gone and left us since.
Asan. Ay, he had reaped
The harvest of his days, and fell asleep
Amid the garnered sheaves.
Gycia. Dearest, I know
He loved thee as a son, and always strove
To fit thee for the place within our State
Which one day should be thine. Sometimes I think,
Since he has gone, I have been covetous
Of thy dear love, and kept thee from the labour
Of State-craft, and the daily manly toils
Which do befit thy age; and I have thought,
Viewing thee with the jealous eyes of love,
That I have marked some shade of melancholy
Creep on when none else saw thee, and desired
If only I might share it.
Asan. Nay, my love,
I have been happy truly, though sometimes,
It may be, I have missed the clear, brisk air
Of the free plains; the trumpet-notes of war,
When far against the sky the glint of spears
Lit by the rising sun revealed the ranks
Of the opposing host, the thundering onset
Of fierce conflicting squadrons, and the advance
Of the victorious hosts. Oh for the vigour
And freshness of such life! But I have chosen
To sleep on beds of down, as Cæsar might,
And live a woman's minion.
Gycia. Good my husband,
Thou shouldst not speak thus. I would have thee win
Thy place in the Senate, rule our Cherson's fortunes,
Be what my father was without the name,
And gain that too in time.
Asan. What! You would have me
Cozen, intrigue, and cheat, and play the huckster,
As your republicans, peace on their lips
And subtle scheming treaties, till the moment
When it is safe to spring? Would you have me cringe
To the ignorant mob of churls, through whose sweet voices
The road to greatness lies? Nay, nay; I am
A King's son, and of Bosphorus, not Cherson—
A Scythian more than Greek.

Gycia. Nay, my good lord,
Scythian or Greek, to me thou art more dear
Than all the world beside. Yet will not duty,
The memory of the dead, the love of country,
The pride of the great race from which we spring,
Suffer my silence wholly, hearing thee.
It is not true that men Athenian-born
Are of less courage, less of noble nature,
More crafty in design, less frank of purpose,
Than are thy countrymen. They have met and fought them,
Thou knowest with what fate. For polity
I hold it better that self-governed men
Should, using freedom, but eschewing license,
Fare to what chequered fate the will of Heaven
Reserves for them, than shackled by the chains
The wisest tyrant, gilding servitude
With seeming gains, imposes. We are free
In speech, in council, in debate, in act,
As when our great Demosthenes hurled back
Defiance to the tyrant. Nay, my lord,
Forgive my open speech. I have not forgot
That we are one in heart and mind and soul,
Knit in sweet bonds for ever. Put from thee
This jaundiced humour.
If State-craft please not, by the head-long chase
Which once I know thou lovedst. Do not grudge
To leave me; for to-day my bosom friend,
After two years of absence, comes to me.
I shall not feel alone, having Irene.

Asan. Whom dost thou say? Irene?

Gycia. Yes, the same.
She was crossed in love, poor girl, dost thou remember,
When we were wed?

Asan. Gycia, I mind it well.
Send her away—she is no companion for thee;
She is not fit, I say.

Gycia. What is't thou sayest?
Thou canst know nought of her. Nay, I remember,
When I did ask thee if thou knewest her
At Bosphorus, thou answeredst that thou didst not.

Asan. I know her. She is no fit mate for thee.

Gycia. Then, thou didst know her when thy tongue denied it.

Asan. How 'tis I know her boots not; I forbid
My wife to know that woman. Send her hence.

Gycia. Nay, nay, my lord, it profits not to quarrel.
Thou art not thyself. Either thou knew'st her name
When we were wedded, or unreasoning spleen
Doth blind thy judgment since. Thou canst not know her
Who has been absent.

Asan. Ask no more, good wife
I give no reason.

Gycia. Nay, indeed, good husband,
Thou hast no reason, and without good reason
I will not spurn my friend.

Asan. Gycia, forgive me;
I spoke but for our good, and I will tell thee
One day what stirs within me, but to-day
Let us not mar our happy memories
By any shade of discord.
Gycia. Oh, my love,
Forgive me if I have seemed, but for a moment,
To fail in duty. I am all, all thine;
I have nought but thee to live for. Childish hands
And baby voices lisping for their mother
Are not for me, nor thee; but, all in all,
We joy together, we sorrow together, and last
Shall die, when the hour comes, as something tells me,
Both in the selfsame hour.
Asan. Nay, wife, we are young;
Our time is not yet come. Let us speak now
Of what I know thou holdest near thy heart.
I do remember that it was thy wish
To celebrate thy father's name and fame
By some high festal. If thy purpose hold
For such observance, the sad day which took him
Returns a short time hence; I will employ
Whatever wealth is mine to do him honour,
And thee, my Gycia. Honouring the sire,
I honour too the child.
Gycia. My love, I thank thee
For this spontaneous kindness, and I love thee;
I am all thine own again. Come, let us go;
Nor spare the wealth wherewith his bounty blest us
To do fit honour to the illustrious dead.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—THE SAME.

MEGACLES, Courtiers; *afterwards* ASANDER.

Meg. Well, my lords, two years have passed since we left our Bosphorus, and I see no sign of our returning there. If it were not for that delightful Lady Melissa, whose humble slave I am always (Courtiers *laugh*), I would give all I am worth to turn my back upon this scurvy city and its republican crew. But my Lord Asander is so devoted to his fair lady—and, indeed, I can hardly wonder at it—that there seems no hope of our seeing the old shores again. I thought he would have been off long ago.

1st Court. A model husband the Prince, a paragon of virtue.

2nd Court. Well, there is no great merit in being faithful to a rich and beautiful woman. I think I could be as steady as a rock under the like conditions.

3rd Court. Well, mind ye, it is not every man who could treat the very marked overtures of the fair Lady Irene as he did. And he had not seen his wife then, either. No; the man is a curious mixture, somewhat cold, and altogether constant, and that is not a bad combination to keep a man straight with the sex. Poor soul! do you remember how she pursued him at Bos-

phorus, and how she fainted away at the wedding? They say she is coming back speedily, in her right mind. She has been away ever since, no one knows where. That solemn brother of hers conveyed her away privily.

1st Court. I hate that fellow—a canting hypocrite, a solemn impostor!

2nd Court. So say we all. But mark you, if the Lady Irene comes back, there will be mischief before long. What news from Bosphorus, my Lord Megacles?

Meg. I have heard a rumour, my lord, that his Majesty the King is ailing.

1st Court. Nay, is he? Then there may be a new King and a new Queen, and we shall leave this dog-hole and live at home like gentlemen once more.

3rd Court. Then would his sacred Majesty's removal be a blessing in disguise.

2nd Court. Ay, indeed would it. Does the Prince know of it?

Meg. I have not told him aught, having, indeed, nothing certain to tell; but he soon will, if it be true. But here his Highness comes.

Enter ASANDER.

My Lord Asander, your Highness's humble servant welcomes you with effusion. [*Bows low.*

Asan. Well, my good Megacles, and you, my lords. There will be ample work for you all ere long. The Lady Gycia is projecting a great festival in memory of her father, and all that the wealth of Cherson can do to honour him will be done. There will be solemn processions, a banquet, and a people's holiday. Dost thou not spy some good ceremonial work there, my good Megacles? Why, thou wilt be as happy as if thou wert at Byzantium itself, marshalling the processions, arranging the banquet, ushering in the guests in due precedence, the shipowner before the merchant, the merchant before the retailer. Why, what couldst thou want more, old Trusty? [*Laughs.*

Meg. Ah, my Lord Prince, your Highness is young. When you are as old as I am, you will not scoff at Ceremony. This is the pleasantest day that I have spent since your Highness's wedding-day. I thank you greatly, and will do my best, your Highness.

Asan. That I am sure of, good Megacles. Good day, my lords, good day. [*Exeunt* MEGACLES *and* Courtiers.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My Lord Asander, a messenger from Bosphorus has just landed, bringing this letter for your Highness.

Asan. Let me see it. (*Reads*) "Lysimachus to Asander sends greeting. Thy father is failing fast, and is always asking for his son. Thou art free, and must come to him before he dies. I have much to say to thee, having heard long since of a festival in memory of Lamachus to be held shortly. I will be with thee before then. Be ready to carry out the plan which I have formed for thy good, and will reveal to thee. Remember."

My father ailing?
And asks for me, and I his only son
Chained here inactive, while the old man pines
In that great solitude which hems a throne,
With none but hirelings round him.
Dearest father,

I fear that sometimes in the happy years
Which have come since, my wandering regards,
Fixed on one overmastering thought, have failed
To keep their wonted duty. If indeed
This thing has been, I joy the time has come
When I may show my love. But I forget!
The fetters honour binds are adamant;
I am free no more. Nay, nay, there is no bond
Can bind a son who hears his father's voice
Call from a bed of pain. I must go and will,
Though all the world cry shame on my dishonour;
And with me I will take my love, my bride,
To glad the old man's eyes. My mind is fixed;
I cannot stay, I cannot rest, away
From Bosphorus. (*Summons* Messenger) Go, call the Lady Gycia.
(*Resumes*) Ay, and my oath, I had forgotten it.
I cannot bear to think what pitiless plot
Lysimachus has woven for the feast.
What it may be I know not, but I fear
Some dark and dreadful deed. 'Twere well enough
For one who never knew the friendly grasp
Of hands that once were foemen's. But for me,
Who have lived among them, come and gone with them,
Trodden with them the daily paths of life,
Mixed in their pleasures, shared their hopes and fears
For two long happy years, to turn and doom
Their city to ruin, and their wives and children
To the insolence of rapine? Nay, I dare not.
I will sail at once, and get me gone for ever.
I will not tell my love that I am bound
By her father's jealous fancies to return
To Bosphorus no more. To break my oath!
That were to break it only in the word,
But keep it in the spirit. Surely Heaven
For such an innocent perjury keeps no pains.
But here she comes.

Enter GYCIA.

Gycia. Didst send for me, my lord?

Asan. Gycia, the King is ill, and asks for me;
He is alone and weak.

Gycia. Then, fly to him
At once, and I will follow thee. But stay!
Is he in danger?

Asan. Nay, not presently;
Only the increasing weight of years o'ersets
His feeble sum of force.

Gycia. Keeps he his bed?

Asan. Not yet as I have known.

Gycia. Well then, dear heart,
We yet may be in time if we should tarry
To celebrate the honours we have vowed
To my dead father. This day sennight brings
The day which saw him die.

Asan. Nay, nay, my sweet;
'Twere best we went at once.

Gycia. My lord, I honour
The love thou bearest him, but go I cannot,
Until the feast is done. 'Twould cast discredit
On every daughter's love for her dead sire,
If I should leave this solemn festival
With all to do, and let the envious crowd
Carp at the scant penurious courtesy
Of hireling honours by an absent daughter
To her illustrious dead.

Asan. (*earnestly*). My love, 'twere best
We both were far away.

Gycia. My lord is pleased
To speak in riddles, but till reason speaks
'Twere waste of time to listen.

Asan. Nay, my wife,
Such words become thee not, but to obey
Is the best grace of woman. Were I able,
I would tell thee all, I fear, for thee and me,
But cannot.

Gycia. Then, love, thou canst go alone,
And I must follow thee. The Archon Zetho
Comes presently, to order what remains
To make the solemn festival do honour
To the blest memory of Lamachus.
Doubtless, he will devise some fitting pretext
To excuse thy absence.

Asan. Nay, thou must not ask him;
Breathe not a word, I pray.

Gycia. My good Asander,
What is it moves thee thus? See, here he comes.

Enter ZETHO *and* Senators.

Gycia. Good morrow, my Lord Zetho! We were late,
Debating of the coming festival,
And how my lord the Prince, having ill news
From Bosphorus, where the King his sire lies sick,
Can bear no part in it.

Zetho. I grieve indeed
To hear this news, and trust that Heaven may send
Swift comfort to his son, whom we all love.

Asan. I thank thee, Archon, for thy courtesy;
And may thy wish come true.

Gycia. And meantime, since my husband's heart is sore
For his sire's lonelihood, our purpose is
That he should sail to-morrow and go hence
To Bosphorus, where I, the festival
Being done, will join him later, and devote
A daughter's loving care and tender hand
To smooth the old man's sick-bed.

Zetho. Nay, my daughter,
I grieve this cannot be. The Prince Asander,
Coming to Cherson only two years gone,
Did pledge his solemn word to thy dead father
That never would he seek, come foul or fair,
To turn from Cherson homewards, and I marvel
That never, in the years that since have passed

Amid the close-knit bonds of wedded lives,
He has revealed this secret. We who rule
Our Cherson know through what blind shoals of fortune
Our ship of state drives onward. And I dare not,
Holding the rule which was thy father's once,
Release him from the solemn pledge which keeps
Our several States bound fast in amity,
But each from the other separate, and each
Free from the perils tangled intercourse
Might breed for both. Indeed, it cannot be;
I grieve that so it is.

Gycia. My Lord Asander,
Are these things so indeed?

Asan. They are, my wife.
A rash and heedless promise binds me fast,
Which, in all frankness, I had never dreamt
Could thus demand fulfilment. Who is there
More loyal to the State than I? Who is there
Bound by such precious chains of love and faith
As is thy husband? If I said no word
Of this before, it was that I would fain
Forget this hateful compact. Sir, I beg you
Let me go hence, and when the old man's sickness
Is done, as Heaven will have it, take my word
That I will be a citizen of Cherson
Again, whate'er may come.

Zetho. If the King dies,
Then art thou straightway King of Bosphorus,
Knowing the strength and weakness of our State,
And having bound to thee by closest friendship
Our chiefest citizens. Nay, nay, I dare not
Relieve thee from the pledge.

Asan. Thou hoary trickster,
Speakest thou thus to me? [*Draws.*

Gycia (*interposing*). Great heavens! Asander,
Knowest thou what thou dost? (*To* ZETHO) Pardon him, sir.
He is not himself, I think, but half distraught,
To bear himself thus madly.

Zetho. Daughter, the State
Knows to protect itself from insolence
And arrogant pride like this, and it is certain
'Twas a wise caution led thy honoured father
To stipulate that such ungoverned passion
Should be cut off from those conspiring forces
From which combined came danger.

Asan. Gycia,
Hearest thou this schemer? Dost thou know indeed
That I am prisoned here, while my loved father
Lies on the bed of death? Dost thou distrust me,
That thou dost speak no word?

Gycia. My lord, I cannot.
The measure which my father's wisdom planned
For the safety of the State, I, a weak woman,

Am too infirm to judge. Thou didst not tell me,
Asking that I should fly with thee, the bonds
By which thy feet were fettered. Had I known
I never had consented. Had I gone,
Breaking the solemn ordinance of State,
I should have left with thee my former love,
And sailed back broken-hearted. That thou grievest
There is none knows as I, but oh, my love!
Though it be hard to bear, yet is grief lighter
Than broken vows, and blighted honour, and laws
Made to sustain the State, yet overset
By one man's will. Dearest, we cannot go—
Nor thou; the State forbids it. I will pray
Thy father may grow strong again, and sit
Here at our hearth a guest; but this is certain—
To Bosphorus we go not. And I pray you
Make to my lord, who fills my father's place,
What reparation thy ungoverned rage
And hasty tongue demand.

Asan. Thou cold Greek woman!
Of this, then, 'twas they warned me—a smooth tongue
And a cold heart; a brain by logic ruled,
And not at all by love. Thou hast no pity,
For pity shapes not into syllogisms;
Nor can affection ape philosophy,
Nor natural love put on the formal robe
Of cold too-balanced State-craft. Hear me, old man,
And thou too, wife. 'Twere better, ay, far better,
That I should get me gone, and my wife with me,
Than be pent here unwilling; but were it better
Or were it worse, be sure I will not stay
When duty calls me hence. Wife, wilt thou come?

Gycia. My lord, I cannot.

Asan. Then, I go alone.

Zetho. Nay, thou shalt not. Ho there! arrest the Prince.

[Guards *arrest* ASANDER.

Asan. Unhand me. At your peril. [*Draws.*

Gycia. Oh, my husband! [*Weeps.*

SCENE III.—A ROOM IN THE PALACE.

IRENE; *afterwards* GYCIA.

Ire. What! am I mad, or does some devilish power
Possess me heart and soul? I once loved Gycia;
I love Asander with o'ermastering love,
And yet these frequent rumours of dissensions
Marring the smooth course of their wedded life
Bring me a swift, fierce joy. If aught befell
To separate those lovers, then might Fate
And Chance open for me the golden doors
That lead to Love's own shrine; and yet I know not
If any power might melt to mutual love

That too-cold heart. But still, no other chance
Is left but this alone: if I should force
Those loving souls apart, then 'twere my turn.
Am I a monster, then, to will this wrong?
Nay, but a lovesick woman only, willing
To dare all for her passion. Though I loathe
Those crooked ways, yet love, despite myself,
Drives me relentless onward.

Enter GYCIA.

Dearest lady,
Why art thou thus cast down? Some lovers' quarrel,
To be interred with kisses?

Gycia. Nay, Irene,
This is no lovers' quarrel.

Ire. Tell me, Gycia,
What was the cause?

Gycia. The King of Bosphorus
Is ailing, and desires to see his son,
Who fain would go to him.

Ire. And thou refusedst
To let thy lover go?

[*Laughs mockingly.*

Gycia. Nay, 'twas not so;
But politic reasons of the State forbad
The Prince's absence.

Ire. Well, whate'er the cause,
The old man fain would see his son, and thou
Deniedst.

Gycia. I denied him what the State
Denied him, and no more.

Ire. The State denied him!
What does it profit thee to be the daughter
Of Lamachus, if thou art fettered thus
In each wish of thy heart? If it were I,
And he my love, I would break all bonds that came
Between me and my love's desire.

Gycia. Irene,
Thou know'st not what thou say'st.

Ire. It may be so;
I do not love by halves.

Gycia. I do not need
That thou shouldst tutor me, who am so blest
In love's requital. I have nought to learn
From thee, who bearest unrequited love
For one thou wilt not name.

Ire. Wouldst thou that I
Should name him? Nay, it were best not, believe me,
For me and thee.

Gycia. Why, what were it to me,
Thou luckless woman?

Ire. What were it to thee?
More than thou knowest, much.

Gycia. And therefore 'tis
That thou dost dare to tutor me to deal
With the man I love, my husband.

Ire. Gycia,
Love is a tyrannous power, and brooks no rival
Beside his throne. Dost thou, then, love indeed,
Who art so filled with duty?

Gycia. Do I love?
Ay, from the depths of my enamoured heart!
I am all his own to make or break at will.
Only my duty to the State my mother
And the thrice-blessèd memory of my sire
Forbids that I should sink my soul in his,

Or, loving, grow unworthy. But, indeed,
Thou pleadest his cause as if thyself did love him.
Ire. As if I loved!—as if!
Gycia. Indeed, 'tis well
Thou didst not, were he free, for he, it seems,
Has known of thee, and speaks not kindly words.
I know not wherefore.
Ire. Did he speak of me?
Gycia. Ay, that he did.
Ire. And what said he?
Gycia. I think
'Twere best thou didst not know.
Ire. Tell me, I prithee;
I can bear to hear.
Gycia. 'Twas but a hasty word,
And best forgotten.
Ire. But I prithee tell me,
What said he?
Gycia. That 'twere best I were alone
Than commercing with thee, since thou wert not
My fit companion.
Ire. Said he that, the coward?
Gycia. I am his wife, Irene.
Ire. What care I?
I have loved this man too well, before he saw thee.
There, thou hast now my secret. I have loved him,
And he loved me, and left me, and betrayed me.
Was it for him to brand me with this stain?
Unfit for thy companion! If I be,
Whose fault is that but his, who found me pure
And left me what I am?
Gycia. What! dost thou dare
Malign my husband thus? I have known his life
From his own lips, and heard no word of thee.
Ire. He did confess he knew me.
Gycia. Ay, indeed,
Not that he did thee wrong.
Ire. My Lady Gycia,
Did ever man confess he wronged a woman?
If thou believe not me, who am indeed
Disgraced, and by his fault, thou once didst love
My brother Theodorus—send for him.
He is without, and waits me. Ask of him,
Who has long known my secret.
Gycia. I will ask him.
Thou wretched woman, since thou art polluted,
Whate'er my love may be, go from my sight,
And send thy brother. Then betake thyself
To a close prison in the haunted Tower,
Till I shall free thee. Out of my sight, I say,
Thou wanton! [*Exit* IRENE.
What have I done, how have I sinned, that Heaven
Tortures me thus? How can I doubt this creature
Speaks something of the truth? Did he not say
At first he never knew that wanton's name?
Did he not afterwards betray such knowledge
Of her and of her life as showed the lie
His former words concealed? And yet how doubt

My dear, who by two years of wedded love
Has knit my soul to his? I know how lightly
The world holds manly virtue, but I hold
The laws of honour are not made to bind
Half of the race alone, leaving men licensed
To break them when they will; but dread decrees
Binding on all our kind. But oh, my love,
I will not doubt thee, till conviction bring
Proofs that I dare not doubt!

Enter THEODORUS.

Theo. My Lady Gycia,
I come at thy command.
Gycia. Good Theodorus,
Thou lovedst me once, I think?
Theo. I loved thee *once!*
Oh, heaven!
Gycia. I am in great perplexity
And sorrow, and I call upon thy friendship
To succour me, by frank and free confession
Of all thou knowest.
Theo. I can refuse thee nothing,
Only I beg that thou wilt ask me nought
That answered may give pain.
Gycia. Nay, it is best
That I know all. I could not bear to live
In ignorance, and yet I fear to grieve thee
By what I ask. Thy sister late has left me——
Theo. Ask not of her, I pray; I cannot answer.
Gycia. Nay, by thy love I ask it. Answer me.
Theo. Have me excused, I pray.
Gycia. Then, I am answered.
My husband, she affirms, betrayed her honour
In Bosphorus, and now denies the crime.
Thou knowest it true.
Theo. Alas! I cannot doubt it.
I have known all for years.
Gycia. Ye saints of heaven!
Is there no shame or purity in men,
Nor room for trust in them? I am a wife
Who thought she did possess her husband wholly,
Virgin with virgin. I have thought I knew
His inmost heart, and found it innocent;
And yet while thus I held him, while I lay
Upon his bosom, all these happy hours
The venom of a shameful secret lurked
Within his breast. Oh, monster of deceit,
Thou never lovedst as I! That I should give
The untouched treasure of my virgin heart
For some foul embers of a burnt-out love,
And lavish on the waste a wanton left
My heart, my soul, my life! Oh, it is cruel!
I will never see him more, nor hear his voice,
But die unloved and friendless.
[*Weeps.*
Theo. (*kneeling at her feet*). Dearest Gycia,
Thou canst not want a brother, friend, and lover

While I am living. Oh, my love, my dear,
Whom I have loved from childhood, put away
This hateful marriage, free thee from the bonds
Of this polluted wedlock, and make happy
One who will love thee always!

Enter LYSIMACHUS *unperceived.*

Gycia. Rise, Theodorus.
I have no love to give. I am a wife.
Such words dishonour me.
Theo. Forgive me, Gycia.
I know how pure thy soul, and would not have thee
Aught other than thou art.
Gycia. I do forgive thee.
'Twas love confused thy reason; but be brave.
Set a guard on thy acts, thy words, thy thoughts.
'Tis an unhappy world!
[THEODORUS *kisses her hand and exit.*
Lys. Most noble lady,
Forgive me if at an unfitting time,
Amid the soft devoirs of gallantry,
I thus intrude unwilling; but I seek
The Prince Asander.
Gycia. I have nought to hide
My husband might not know.
Lys. Then, thou art, doubtless,
His wife, the Lady Gycia. Good my lady,
With such a presence to become a crown,
We would you were at Bosphorus.
Gycia. 'Tis clear
Thou art a stranger here, or thou wouldst know
That never would I leave my native city
To win the crown of Rome.
Lys. Madam, 'tis pity.
Gycia. Sir, this is courtly talk. You came to see
My husband; I will order that they send him
At once to you. [*Exit* GYCIA.
Lys. That was indeed good fortune brought me hither
When her lover knelt to her. I do not wonder
That kneel he should, for she is beautiful
As Helen's self. There comes some difference
Between her and Asander, and 'twere strange
If I might not so work on't as to widen
The breach good fortune sends me, and to bind,
Through that which I have seen, the boy her husband,
To execute my will.

Enter ASANDER.

Asan. Lysimachus,
I am rejoiced to see thee.
Lys. Good my lord,
How goes the world with thee? Thou art in mien
Graver than thou wast once.
Asan. I am ill at ease!
I am ill at ease! How does the King my father?
Lys. Alas! sir, he is ailing, and I fear
Will never mend.
Asan. Is he in present danger?
Lys. Ay, that he is. A month or less from this
May see the end.
Asan. Keeps he his bed as yet?
Lys. Nay, not yet, when I left him; but his mind

Turns always to his absent son with longing,
And sometimes, as it were 'twixt sleep and waking,
I hear him say, "Asander, oh, my son!
Shall I not see thee more?"
Asan. Oh, my dear father!
And dost thou love me thus, who have forgot thee
These two long years? Belovèd, lonely life!
Belovèd failing eyes! Lysimachus,
I must go hence, and yet my honour binds me.
O God, which shall I choose? They do forbid me—
The ruler of this place and that good woman
Who is my wife, but holds their cursèd State
More than my love—to go.
Lys. My prince, I come
To find a way by which thou mayst go free
From that which binds thee fast. This festival
To the dead Lamachus will give the occasion
To set thee free. If thou dost doubt to break
Thy word, yet doth a stronger, straiter chain
Bind thee—thy oath. Thou hast not forgot thy oath
To Bosphorus?
Asan. Nay, I forget it not.
But what is it thou wouldst of me?
Lys. Asander,
The night which ends the festival shall see us
Masters of Cherson.
Asan. Nay, but 'twere dishonour
To set upon a friendly State from ambush—
'Twere murder, and not battle.
Lys. Art thou false
To thy own land and to thy dying father?
Asan. That I am not; but never could I bear
To play the midnight thief, and massacre
Without announcement of legitimate war
Whom daily I have known. My wife I love
With all the love of my soul. If she seem cold
When any word is spoken which may touch
The safety of the State, think you she would love
The husband who destroyed it? All my heart
Is in her keeping.
Lys. It is well indeed
To have such faith. Doubtless the Lady Gycia
Returns this pure affection.
Asan. I would doubt
The saints in heaven sooner than her truth,
Which if I doubted, then the skies might fall,
The bounds of right and wrong might be removed,
The perjurer show truthful, and the wanton
Chaste as the virgin, and the cold, pure saint
More foolish than the prodigal who eats
The husks of sense—it were all one to me;
I could not trust in virtue.

Lys. Thou art changed
Since when thy ship set sail from Bosphorus;
Thou didst not always think with such fond thought
As now thou dost. Say, didst thou find thy bride
Heart-whole as thou didst wish? Had she no lover
Ere yet thou camest?
Asan. Nay, nay; I found my wife
Virgin in heart and soul.
Lys. My Lord Asander,
Art thou too credulous here? What if I saw her
On that same spot, not half an hour ago,
In tears, and kneeling at her feet a gallant
Noble and comely as a morn in June,
Who bade her break, with passionate words of love,
Her hateful marriage vows, and make him blest
Who must for ever love?
Asan. Thou sawest my wife
Gycia, my pearl of women, my life, my treasure?
Nay, nay, 'tis some sick dream! Thou art mistaken.
Who knelt to her?
Lys. She called him Theodorus.
Asan. Irene's brother! Who was it who said
He loved her without hope? Lysimachus,
What is it that thou sawest? Come, 'tis a jest!
Kneeling to Gycia, praying her to fly!
Nay, nay, what folly is this? [*Laughs.*
Lys. My lord, I swear
It is no jest indeed, but solemn earnest.
I saw him kneel to her; I heard the passion
Burn through his voice.
Asan. And she? What did my lady?
She did repulse him sternly?
Lys. Nay, indeed,
She wept; was greatly moved, and whispered to him,
"I am a wife."
Asan. Peace, peace! I will not hear
Another word. How little do they know thee,
My white, pure dove! My Lord Lysimachus,
Some glamour has misled thee.
Lys. Well, my lord,
I should rejoice to think it, but I cannot
Deny my eyes and ears. Is not this noble
The brother of the lady who was once
At Bosphorus at Court, and now attends
The Lady Gycia?
Asan. Ay, indeed he is.
Lys. Well, she is near at hand; if thy belief
Inclines not to my tale—which yet is true—
Couldst thou not ask of her if ere your marriage
Her brother was enamoured of your wife,
And she of him?
Asan. That might I do indeed.
But, sooth to say, I would not speak again
With her you name; and it may be indeed,
I know her well, the Lady Gycia,
Who is angered with her for what cause I know not,
Might well resent the converse.

Lys. Prince Asander,
There is no man so blind as he who closes
His eyes to the light and will not have it shine,
As thou dost now.
Asan. Then will I see this lady,
Though knowing it is vain.
[*Exit* ASANDER.
Lys. I do not know
What he will hear, but this at least I know:
That woman loves him, and will lie to sow
Dissension 'twixt these lovers—which accomplished,
The rest is easy, and I hold this Cherson
To make or mar at will. Ha! a good thought.
I will send a message to the Lady Gycia
Which shall ensure't. If she mislikes her friend,
It is odds of ten to one some jealous humour
Has caused it, or may grow of it.
[*Writes.*
"Dear lady,
Thou art wronged; the Prince Asander presently
Is with Irene alone. Seek them, and wring
Confession of their fault."
[*Summons a* Messenger.
Ho there! convey
These to the Lady Gycia, but stay not
To tell her whence they come.
Mess. I go, my lord.

SCENE IV.—IRENE'S PRISON.

IRENE; *afterwards* ASANDER *and* GYCIA.

Ire. To think that once I loved that haughty woman!
Ah, that was long ago, before love came
To tear our lives asunder. Though her power
Can pen me here a prisoner, yet I know
That I have pierced her heart. Oh, it is sweet
To be revenged, and know that vengeance brings
Victory in its train! If I had power
To make Asander jealous of this wonder,
Then all were easy. But I know no means
Whereby from this strait prison I might sow
Suspicion of her who has never given
A shadow of cause.
Attendant. The Lord Asander comes.

Enter ASANDER.

Asan. Lady, I grieve that thou art in this place,
And fain would set thee free. Tell me what cause
Has brought thee hither.
Ire. Ask me not, my lord;
I cannot tell thee.
Asan. Nay, but know I must,
To plead thy cause.
Ire. 'Twas too great love of thee,
The love which thou didst spurn, that brought me here.
Asan. But how should that be so?
Ire. The Lady Gycia,
Holding thee to thy promise that thou wouldst not

Go hence—no, not to close thy father's eyes—
Took umbrage that I spoke with scant respect
Of such unreasoning and unnatural bond
As that which she approves.
Asan. Then am I grateful
For thy good-will, and grieve that it should bring thee
To pine a prisoner here, and will essay
What reason can to free thee.
Ire. Thanks, my lord,
I would that *thou* wert free. I knew the King,
And did receive much fatherly affection
From that most reverend man. I grieve to hear
That he lies sick, and would rejoice to tend him
As if I were a daughter.
Asan. Gentle lady,
No other voice of sympathy than thine
Have I yet heard in Cherson, and I thank thee
For thy good-will.
Ire. 'Tis always thine, my lord,
And more, though I should end my wretched days
In prison for thy sake.
Asan. I thank thee, lady,
And fain would ask of thee a greater kindness:
I would that thou wouldst tell me of thy brother.
Ire. My brother Theodorus? What of him?
Asan. This only. Did he, ere I knew my wife,
Bear towards her a great though innocent love?
Ire. A great though innocent love? Ay, a great love,
For certain. Spoke she not of it to thee?
Asan. No word!
Ire. Ah! yet, maybe, 'twas innocent—
Nay, I believe it, though she spoke not of it,
And 'tis the wont of wives to laugh and boast
Of innocent conquests.
Asan. Nay, she spoke no word.
Ire. And did no other of thy friends at Cherson
Tell thee? Why, 'twas the talk of all the city
How close they grew together, till thy coming
And the necessities of Cherson turned
Her eyes from him to thee.
Asan. And does he still
Bear love for her?
Ire. And does he still bear love?
Ay, passionate love. The heart which truly loves
Puts not its love aside for ends of State,
Or marriage bonds, or what the dullard law
Suffers or does not suffer, but grows stronger
For that which seeks to thwart it.
Asan. And did she
My wife return this love?
Ire. Ay, so 'twas said.
Ask me no more, I pray!

Enter GYCIA *unperceived.*

Asan. Nay, by the love
Thou bearest to me, speak!
Gycia. My Lord Asander,
What dost thou with this woman thus alone?
Asan. 'Twere best thou didst not ask.

Gycia. I have a right;
will be answered. First, thou didst deny
Thou knewest aught of her; then said her nature
Was such I might not call her friend, or live
With her within four walls; and now, her fault—
Which she herself proclaimed—penning her here
n a close prison, thou my husband comest
To comfort her, 'twould seem—to travel o'er
Again the old foul paths and secretly
To gloat on the old passion.
Asan. Nay, I came
Not for this cause, but one which I will tell thee.
came to question of thy former love.
Gycia. To question *her* of *me?*
Asan. To know the cause
That made my wife, scarce one short hour ago,
Within my home, when hardly I had left her,
Receive alone a lover kneeling to her
With words of passionate love, and whisper to him,
'I am a wife."
Gycia. Hast thou no shame, Asander,
To speak such words to me before this woman,
Who knows her brother's life?
Ire. Nay, prithee, madam,
Appeal not to me thus; I could say much
On which I would keep silence.
Gycia. Thou base woman,
And thou poor dupe or most perfidious man,
It were to honour ye to make defence
Against a wanton and her paramour;
But thee, Asander, never will I take
To my heart again, till thou hast put from thee
This lying accusation, and dost ask
Pardon that thou hast dared with this base wretch
To impugn my honour.
Asan. Thou hast said no word
Of answer to my charge; thy bold defiance
Argues thy guilt.
Gycia. My guilt? And canst thou dare
To say this thing to me? I will speak no word;
Denial were disgrace. Sir, I will have you
Leave this place quickly.
Asan. Madam, I obey you. [*Exit.*
Gycia. And I too go. [*Exit.*
Ire. I hold these hapless fools
In the hollow of my hand.

SCENE V.—OUTSIDE THE PALACE.

LYSIMACHUS *and three* Courtiers; *afterwards* ASANDER.

Lys. My lords, what have you to report? Have the men arrived?

1st Court. For a week past they have been arriving at the rate of fifty a day. The ships anchor in due course. At dead of night, when everything is still, the merchandise is landed and conveyed well-disguised to the disused granaries adjoining Lamachus' palace, with good store of arms and provisions.

2nd Court. Yes, and by the day of the festival we shall have more than

five hundred well-armed men within the walls, who, while the people are feasting, will bear down all opposing forces and open the gates to the larger body, who will lie concealed in the grain-ships in the harbour.

Lys. Does no one suspect, think you, as yet?

1st Court. Not a soul. The stores are landed at midnight, and the place is haunted and full of noises.

3rd Court. Does the Prince know?

Lys. Not yet, not a word. I can't trust him with his blind love for his wife.

3rd Court. What if he will not be of us?

Lys. Then he shall be put under hatches at once for Bosphorus, and may take his wife with him if he pleases.

1st Court. But will he pardon the deed?

Lys. The lad is a good lad enough, but weak as water. The world always pardons successful enterprises. Besides, I am in great hopes that he has so quarrelled with the ruler of Cherson, and may be, moreover, so out of conceit with his wife, that we can do as we will with him.

2nd Court. But be prudent, my Lord Lysimachus, I beg, for we know not how far he is with us, and if he is against us now, it may take more than we know to keep our heads on our shoulders.

Lys. My lords, you shall not lose a drop of your blood. But here is my Lord Asander. He looks cast down enough, in all conscience.

Enter ASANDER.

Well, Prince, hast thou seen the lady?

Asan. Speak not to me of her, I pray. I must leave this accursed place at once and for ever, and must take my wife with me. Once in Bosphorus, I may know again the happiness which is denied me here. I will not stay here a day. Is there any ship from Bosphorus in harbour? Get me away to-night secretly, and the Lady Gycia with me.

Lys. My lord, there are many ships here from Bosphorus, but none empty or which can be spared now; but it wants but two days to the festival, and if thou wilt tarry until then, it may be we can so arrange that either thou mayst set sail for Bosphorus at will or bring Bosphorus hither at will.

Asan. What do these words mean? You speak in riddles. I care not what becomes of me, but remember my honour, Lysimachus, my honour! If any scheme against the State of Cherson is in your mind, I will have none of it. I want nothing of these people, only to be allowed to turn my back upon them and their intrigues for ever, and to carry the wife whom I love far away from the air of chicane and base deceit which makes this Cherson a hell.

Lys. My Lord Asander, thou hast not forgot
Thy oath which thou didst swear ere first you left
Our Bosphorus, that, come what fate should come,
Thou wouldst not forget her. Now, Fate would have it,
These gentlemen and I, hearing rep
Of the grand festival which n approaches,
Have ta'en such measures as may n our city
Mistress of this her rival. Day by

hips laden deep with merchandise
cast anchor
y Lamachus's palace, and unload
dead of night their tale of armèd
men,
id by to-morrow night, which is the
eve
the feast, five hundred men-at-arms
or more
a dark hall, long empty and disused,
yese fools deem haunted, where the
it sounds they make
d:m not of earth, and none draw near
e to hear,
ill lie concealed. These, when the
festival
as spent itself, and the drowsed
citizens,
eavy with meat and wine, are fast
asleep,
ill issue forth at midnight and will
seize
he guardians of the gates, and throw
them open
o an o'erwhelming force which fills
the ships
hich lie within the harbour. For the
rest,
herson is ours, thou free to go or stay,
ing if thou wilt; but this, my lord,
know well—
ven if thou hast no reverence for thy
oath,
power on earth can free thee from
thy bonds
speed thee hence, if still this cursèd
State
eps its free power. Therefore, look
well to it.

Asan. I cannot do this thing. I
am no thief
midnight murderer, but a prince and
soldier.
Place me in open battle, and I care
not
For bloodshed; but this murderous
intrigue,
I will have none o't.

Lys. Nay, my lord, in sooth,
Why think of bloodshed? If our
scheme go right
(And nought can mar it now), what
need of blood?
These smooth knaves, though they
fight behind their walls
With cunning enginery, yet when they
see
Our army in their streets, will straight
grow prudent
And hug discretion. But, indeed, my
lord,
We have gone too far to pause, and if
thou like not
Our scheme, which makes for thee and
for our State,
We cannot risk that thou denounce our
plan,
And therefore, if thou wilt not join with
us,
The safety of ourselves and of the
State
Holds thee a prisoner pent in close
duress
Till victory is ours, and thou mayst
take
The fruit of others' daring, while thy
wife
Deserts her doubting and dishonoured
lord
For one who dares to act and play his
part
As a man should.

Asan. (*after hesitation*). I do not
hold with you,
That a man's oath can bind him to his
God

To do what else were wrong. Yet, since you swear
Your purpose is not bloodshed, and my will
Is impotent to stay your choice, and chiefly
Because I am cast down and sick at heart,
And without any trust in God or man,
I do consent to your conspiracy,
Loving it not.

Lys. There spoke my lord the Prince.
We will succeed or die.

Asan. I would sooner die.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—CHERSON. IRENE'S PRISON.

IRENE; *then the Gaoler's* Child; *afterwards* GYCIA.

Ire. Ah me! The heaviness of prisoned days!
Heigho! 'Tis weary work in prison here.
What though I know no loss but liberty,
Have everything at will—food, service, all
That I should have, being free—yet doth constraint
Poison life at its spring; and if I thought
This woman's jealous humour would endure,
I would sooner be a hireling set to tend
The kine upon the plains, in heat or cold,
Chilled through by the sharp east, scorched by the sun,
So only I might wander as I would
At my own will, than weary to be free
From this luxurious cell. Hark!

[*The tramp of armed men is heard*
What was that sound
I could swear I heard the measured tramp of men
And ring of mail, yet is it but illusion.
Last night I thought I heard it as I lay
Awake at dead of night. Mere fancy
Born of long solitude, for here there
No soldiers nor mailed feet.

[*Again heard*
Hark! once again
Nay, I must curb these fancies.

Enter Child.

Child. Gentle lady
Ire. Speak, little one. Come hither.
Child. Gentle lady
My father, who is Warder of this tower,
Bade me come hither and ask thee if thou wouldst
That I should hold thy distaff, or might render
Some other service.

Ire. Ay, child; a good thought
Bring me my spinning-wheel.

[Child *brings it*
Ire. (*spinning*). The light is fading fast, but I would choose
This twilight, if thou wilt not be afraid
Of the darkness, little one.

Child. Nay, that I am not
With one so good as thou.

Ire. Nay, child, it may be
I am not all thou think'st me.

Child. But, dear lady
Are not all noble ladies good
Ire.
Nor many, maybe.

'hild. To be sure they are not,
e were they not imprisoned.
re. Little one,
: all who pine in prison are not good,
r innocent who go free.
Child. The Lady Gycia,
she not good?
Ire. It may be that she is.
'is a vile world, my child.
Child. Nay, I am sure
e Lady Gycia is as white and pure
are the angels. When my mother
died
ie did commend me to her, and she
promised
o keep me always.
Ire. But she sent me here.
Child. Ah! lady, then I fear thou
art not good.
am sorry for thee.
Ire. So, my child, am I.
The tramp of armed feet is heard again.
Child. Ah! lady, what is that? I
am afraid.
)idst hear the ghostly feet?
Ire. What heardst thou, child?
Child. A tramp of armèd men and
ring of mail.
Ire. Then, 'tis no fancy of my weary
brain.
f it comes again I must inquire into it.
'is passing strange. Be not afraid,
my child.
was but the wind which echoed
through the void
the vast storehouses below us.
Come, [*Spinning.*
t us to spinning. Twirl and twirl
and twirl;
'is a strange task.
Child. Lady, I love it dearly.
y mother span, and I would sit by her
he livelong day.

Ire. Didst ever hear the tale
Of the Fates and how they spin?
Child. I do not think so.
Wilt tell me?
Ire. There were three weird sisters
once,
Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos,
Who spun the web of fate for each new
life,
Sometimes, as I do now, a brighter
thread
Woven with the dark, and sometimes
black as night,
Until at last came Atropos and cut
The fine-worn life-thread thus.
[*Cuts the thread; the head of the spindle rolls away.*
Child. And hast thou cut
Some life-thread now?
Ire. My child, I am no Fate,
And yet I know not; but the spindle's
head
Rolled hence to yonder corner. Let us
seek it.
Hast found it?
Child. Nay, there is so little light,
I think that it has fallen in the crevice
Beneath yon panel.
Ire. Stoop and seek it, child.
Perchance the panel slides, and then,
it may be,
We shall let in the light.
[*Draws back the panel and discovers a bright light, files of armed men, and* ASANDER *in the midst.*
Child. Ay, there it is;
We have it, we have found it.
[*Sliding panel back again.*
Ire. What have we found?
What have we found? Yes, little one,
'tis found!
Run away now—I fain would be
alone—

And come back presently.
[*Kisses* Child, *who goes.*
These were the sounds
I heard and thought were fancy's. All is clear
As is the blaze of noon. The Prince Asander
Is traitor to the State, and will o'erwhelm it
When all the citizens are sunk in sleep
After to-morrow's feast. Well, what care I?
He is not for me, whether we call him King
Or Archon; and for these good men of Cherson,
What is their fate to me? If he succeed,
As now he must, since no one knows the secret,
'Twill only be a change of name—no more.
The King and Queen will hold a statelier Court
And live contented when the thing is done,
And that is all. For who will call it treason
When victory crowns the plot? But stay! a gleam
Of new-born hope. What, what if it should fail
As I could make it fail? What if this woman,
Full of fantastic reverence for the dead,
And nourished on her cold republican dream,
Should learn the treason ere 'twas done and mar it?
Would not Asander hate her for the failure?
And she him for the plot? I know her well,
I know her love for him, but w know
She is so proud of her Athenian bl
And of this old republic, she w banish
Her love for less than this. C separated,
The Prince safe over seas in Bospho
His former love turned to injuri pride,
I might prevail! I would!

Re-enter CHILD.

Nay, little c
We will spin no more to-day. I pritl go
And seek the Lady Gycia. Say to h
By all the memory of our former lov
I pray that she will come to me once.
Lose not a moment. [*Exit* Chi
Hark! the tramp agai
Again the ring of mail. I wond much
If she shall hear it first, or first the e
Shall slay her love within her.

Enter GYCIA.

Gycia. Thou dost a
My presence; wherefore is it?
Ire. Gyci
Thou dost not love me, yet would requite
Thy wrong with kindness. That t love was false
To thee, thou knowest, but it may still
There is a deeper falsehood thar thee,
And thou shalt know it. Dost th hear that sound?
[*The tramp of men again hea*
What means it, think you?

Gycia. Nay, I cannot tell.
is like the tramp of armèd men.
Ire. It is;
nd who are they?
Gycia. Young citizens of Cherson,
aybe, rehearsing for to-morrow's pageant
nd the procession. [*Going.*
Ire. Stay, thou stubborn woman,
nst bear to see, though the sight blight thy life?
Gycia. I know not what thou wouldst, but I can bear it.
Ire. Though it prove thy love a traitor?
Gycia. That it will not!
Ire. Then, make no sound, but see what I will show thee.
ook now! Behold thy love!
[*Draws back panel, and discovers* ASANDER *with the soldiers of Bosphorus standing in line.* ASANDER'S *voice heard.*
Asan. At stroke of midnight
o-morrow night be ready.
Soldiers. Ay, my lord.
[GYCIA *tottering back.* IRENE *slides back the panel, and* GYCIA *sets her back against it, half fainting;* IRENE *regarding her with triumph.*
Gycia. Was that my husband? and those men around him
oldiers of Bosphorus, to whom he gave
ie swift command? What means it all, ye saints?
at means it? This the husband of my love,
on whose breast I have lain night by night
r two sweet years—my husband whom my father
Loved as a son, whose every thought I knew,
Or deemed I did, lurking in ambush here
Upon the eve of our great festival,
Scheming some bloody treachery to take
Our Cherson in the toils? Oh, 'tis too much;
I cannot trust my senses! 'Twas a dream!
Ire. No dream, but dreadful truth!
Gycia. Thou cruel woman,
How have I harmed thee, thou shouldst hate me thus?
But 'twas no dream. Why was it else that he,
But for some hateful treachery, devised
This festival? Why was it that he grew
So anxious to go hence and take me with him,
But that guilt made him coward, and he feared
To see his work? Oh, love for ever lost,
And with it faith gone out! what is't remains
But duty, though the path be rough and trod
By bruised and bleeding feet? Oh, what is it
Is left for me in life but death alone,
Which ends it?
Ire. Gycia, duty bids thee banish
Thy love to his own State, and then disclose
The plot thou hast discovered. It may be
That thou mayst join him yet, and yet grow happy.
Gycia. Never! For duty treads another path
Than that thou knowest. I am my father's daughter.

It is not mine to pardon or condemn;
That is the State's alone. 'Tis for the State
To banish, not for me, and therefore surely
I must denounce these traitors to the Senate,
And leave the judgment theirs.

Ire. (*kneeling*). Nay, nay, I pray thee,
Do not this thing! Thou dost not know how cruel
Is State-craft, or what cold and stony hearts
Freeze in their politic breasts.

Gycia. *Thou* kneel'st to me
To spare my husband! Think'st thou I love him less
Than thou dost, wanton?

Ire. Gycia, they will kill him.
Get him away to-night to Bosphorus.
Thou dost not know these men!

Gycia. *I* know them not?
I who have lived in Cherson all my days,
And trust the State? Nay, I will get me hence,
And will denounce this treason to the Senate.
There lies my duty clear, and I will do it;
I fear not for the rest. The State is clement
To vanquished foes, and doubtless will find means
To send them hence in safety. For myself
I know not what may come—a broken heart,
Maybe, and death to mend it. But for thee,
Thou shameless wanton, if thou breathe a sound
Or make a sign to them, thou diest night
With torture.

Ire. Spare him! Do not thing, Gycia! [*Exit* GY

O God, she is gone! he is lost! ar undone! [*Swo*

SCENE II.—ROOM IN LAMACHU PALACE.

MEGACLES, Court LYSIMACHUS, [illegible]rds ASANDER.

afterwa[illegible] Megacles, I

Lys. Well, good [illegible]rry out you are prepared to [illegible] function. It will be a busy and day to-morrow, no doubt, and most us will be glad when midnight strikes

Meg. My Lord Lysimachus, I ho so. I have not closed an eye for t last two nights. As to the Procession I flatter myself that no better-arrange pomp has ever defiled before Cæsar Palace. It will be long, it will b splendid, it will be properly marshalled. There is no other man in the Empir who knows the distinctions of rank o the mysteries of marshalling better tha I do. Look at the books I have studied There is the treatise of the Learned an Respectable Symmachus on Processions That is one. There is the late divin Emperor Theodosius on Dignities an Titles of Honour. That is two. T is our Learned and Illustrious C berlain Procopius's treatise on office and duties of a Count o Palace. That, as no doubt you k is in six large volumes. That is th or, nay, eight volumes. Oh, my p head! And I have said nothing of authorities on Costume—a library,

assure you, in themselves. Yes, it has been an anxious time, but a very happy one. I wish our young friends here would devote a little more time to such serious topics, and less to such frivolities as fighting and making love. The latter is a fine art, no doubt, and, when done according to rule, is well enough; but as for fighting, getting oneself grimed with dust and sweat, and very likely some vulgar churl's common blood to boot—pah! it is intolerable to think of it.

1st Court. Ah! good Megacles, I am afraid that the world cannot spare its soldiers yet for many years to come. So long as there is evil in the world, and lust of power and savagery and barbarism, so long, depend upon it, most [illegible]e is room and need for the soldier. strikes.

Meg. Certainly, my lord, certainly; I hope besides, they are very highly [illegible]for the[illegible]rative too. Nothing looks better [illegible]session[illegible]my mind at a banquet than bright [illegible]anged faces and lithe young figures set in [illegible]esar[illegible]shining framework of mail. By the [illegible]ill by, my Lord Lysimachus, it was kind [illegible]lled you to provide our procession with a [illegible]pir[illegible]rong detachment of fine young soldiers [illegible]om Bosphorus. I have secured a [illegible]ha[illegible]rominent place for them, and the [illegible]el[illegible]fect will be perfect. I trust the Lady [illegible]Melissa will like it.

Lys. My lord, you are mistaken; [illegible]re are no soldiers from Bosphorus [illegible]".

Meg. But I was with the Prince last [illegible]ght, and saw them.

Lys. I tell you you are mistaken. There are none here. Do you understand me? There are none here.

2nd Court. Nay, indeed, my Lord Megacles. We were trying, with a view to the pageant, how a number of young men of Cherson would look in the array of Bosphorus; but we gave it up, since we feared that they would bear them so clumsily that they would mar the whole effect.

Meg. Ah, that explains it; quite right, quite right. Well, I see I was mistaken. But I wish I could have had soldiers from Bosphorus. They are the one thing wanting to make to-morrow a perfect success, as the Lady Melissa said.

Lys. They are indeed, as you say. But, my Lord Megacles, pray do not whisper abroad what you have said here; these people are so jealous. They would grow sullen, and spoil the pageant altogether.

Meg. Ah, my lord, you have a good head. I will not breathe a word of it till the day is done.

Lys. Thanks, my lord, and as I know you will be weary with the long day's work and your great anxieties, I am going to lay a little friendly compulsion upon you. You must leave the banquet to-morrow and go to rest by eleven o'clock at latest.

Meg. Well, my lord, I am not so young as I was, and if I have your permission to leave before all is over, well and good. No one knows what an anxious day is before me, and I have no doubt I shall have earned my night's rest by then. But I have much yet to do, so with your permission I will wish you good night.

[*Exit* MEGACLES, *bowing low to each with exaggerated gestures.*

Lys. Poor soul, poor soul! If any fight comes, it would be as cruel to let him take his part with men as it would be if he were a woman or a child.

'Tis scarce an hour ago, that in my house,
Drawing some secret panel in the wall,
I saw the long hall filled with armèd men
Of Bosphorus, and at their head—O Heaven,
I cannot say it!—at their head I saw
My husband, my Asander, my own love,
[Senators *rise with strong emotion.*
Who ordered them and bade them all stand ready
To-morrow night at midnight. What means this?
What else than that these traitorous bands shall slay
Our Cherson's liberties, and give to murder
Our unsuspecting people, whom the feast
Leaves unprepared for war? I pray you, sirs,
Lose not one moment. Call the citizens
To arms while yet 'tis time! Defeat this plot!
Do justice on these traitors! Save the city,
Though I am lost!

Zet. Daughter, thy loyal love
To our dear city calls for grateful honour
From us who rule. In thy young veins the blood
Of patriot Lamachus flows to-day as strong
As once it did in his; nay, the warm tide
Which stirred the lips of bold Demosthenes
And all that dauntless band who of old time
Gave heart and life for Athens, still is thine
In our Hellenic story, there is none
Who has done more than thou, who hast placed love,
Wedlock, and queenly rule, and all things dear
To a tender woman's heart, below the State—
A patriot before all. Is there no favour
A State preserved may grant thee?

Gycia. Noble Zetho,
I ask but this. I know my husband's heart,
How true it was and loyal. He is led,
I swear, by evil counsels to this crime:
And maybe, though I seek not to excuse him,
It was the son's love for his dying sire,
Whom he should see no more, that scheming men
Have worked on to his ruin. Banish him
To his own city, though it break my heart,
But harm him not; and for those wretched men
Whose duty 'tis to obey, shed not their blood,
But let the vengeance of our city fall
Upon the guilty only.

Zet. Brethren all,
Ye hear what 'tis she asks, and though to grant it
Is difficult indeed, yet her petition
Comes from the saviour of the State. I think
We well may grant her prayer. Though well I know
How great the danger, yet do I believe
It may be done. Is it so, worthy brethren?
[Senators *nod assent.*
Daughter, thy prayer is granted.

Gycia. Sirs, I thank you ;
ove you for your mercy.
Zet. For the rest,
:ounsel that we do not rouse the city.
'were of no use to-night to set our arms,
.unt with long peace and rusted with disuse,
gainst these banded levies. By to-morrow—
nd we are safe till then—we shall have time
o league together such o'erwhelming force
s may make bloodshed needless, vain their plot,
nd mercy possible. Meantime, dear lady,
reathe not a word of what thine eyes have seen,
ut bear thyself as though thou hadst seen nothing,
.nd had no care excepting to do honour
o thy dead sire ; and when the weary day
'ends to its close, school thou thy heavy heart,
.nd wear what mask of joy thou canst, and sit
miling beside thy lord at the high feast,
Vhere all will meet. See that his cup is filled
'o the brim ; drink healths to Bosphorus and Cherson.
eem thou to drink thyself, having a goblet
)f such a colour as makes water blush
:osy as wine. When all the strangers' eyes
:row heavy, then, some half an hour or more
'rom midnight, rise as if to go to rest,
Bid all good night, and thank them for their presence.
Then, issuing from the banquet-hall, lock fast
The great doors after thee, and bring the key
To us, who here await thee. Thus shalt thou
Save this thy State, and him thy love, and all.
For we will, ere the fateful midnight comes,
Send such o'erwhelming forces to surround them
That they must needs surrender, and ere dawn
Shall be long leagues away. We will not shed
A drop of blood, my daughter.
Gycia. Noble Zetho,
I thank you and these worthy senators.
I knew you would be merciful. I thank you,
And will obey in all things.
[*Exit* GYCIA.
Bardanes, 1st Sen. She is gone ;
I durst not speak before her. Dost thou know,
Good Zetho, how infirm for war our State
After long peace has grown? I doubt if all
The men whom we might arm before the hour
Are matched in numbers with those murderous hordes ;
While in experience of arms, in training,
In everything that makes a soldier strong,
We are no match for them. Our paramount duty
Is to the State alone, not to these pirates

Who lie in wait to slay us; nor to one
Who, woman-like, knows not our strength or weakness,
Nor cares, if only she might wring a promise
To spare her traitorous love. But we have arts
Which these barbarians know not, quenchless fires
Which in one moment can enwrap their stronghold
In one red ring of ruin. My counsel is,
That ere the hour of midnight comes we place
Around the palace walls on every side
Such store of fuel and oils and cunning drugs
As at one sign may leap a wall of fire
Impassable, and burn these hateful traitors
Like hornets in their nest.

Zetho. Good brethren all,
Is this your will? Is it faith? Is it honour, think you,
To one who has given all, for us to break
Our solemn plighted word?

2nd Sen. We will not break it;
We shed no drop of blood. The State demands it;
The safety of the State doth override
All other claim. The safety of the State
Is more than all!

All the Senators, with uplifted arms. Ay, Zetho, more than all!

Zetho. Then, be it as you will. See, therefore, to it;
Take measures that your will be done, not mine.
Though I approve not, yet I may not set
My will against the universal voice.
Save us our Cherson. For the rest I care not,
Only I grieve to break our solemn promise
To Lamachus's child. Poor heart! poor heart!

ACT V.

SCENE I.—OUTSIDE LAMACHUS'S PALACE.

MEGACLES, LYSIMACHUS, Courtiers, *and* Citizens *of Cherson.*

Meg. Oh, this has been a happy day. All has gone admirably. Not a hitch in all the arrangements. Precedence kept, rank observed, dresses all they should be. I do not, I really do not think, though I say it who should not, that the Imperial Chamberlain at Constantinople could have conducted the matter better.

1st Court. Nay, that he could not, good Megacles. Let us hope that what remains to do will go as smoothly.

Meg. What remains? Doubtless you mean the banquet. That is all arranged long ago under three heads. First, the order of entering the hall; second, the order of the seats; third, the order of going forth.

Lys. Doubtless the last will arrange itself. Remember, the only order of going to be observed is this, that thou get thyself gone, and all the guests from Cherson gone, fully half an hour before midnight.

Meg. But, my lord, that is impos-

sible; you ask too much. How long do you suppose it will take, at a moderate computation, to get one hundred men of ill-defined rank out of a room with a decent regard for Precedence. Why, I have seen it take an hour at the Palace, where everybody knew his place, and here I cannot undertake to do it under two.

Lys. My friend, you will get it done; you will waive ceremony. None but the Prince and ourselves must remain within half an hour of midnight, and the hall must be cleared.

Meg. Ah, well, my Lord Lysimachus, the responsibility rests with you; I will have none of it. It is as much as my reputation is worth. But if I do this, cannot you let me have a guard of honour of armed men to stand at intervals along the hall. I have been longing for them all day.

Lys. (*angrily*). Peace, fool! I have told you before we have no soldiers here.

[People *of Cherson overhearing him.*

1st Cit. Didst hear that old man? He believes there are soldiers here. Whence do they come? and why did the other check him?

Meg. Well, my Lord Lysimachus, if not soldiers, men-at-arms, and these there certainly are, and highly decorative too.

2nd Cit. I hate these Bosphorians. What if the rumour should be true? Pass the word to the citizens that they sleep not to-night, but keep their arms ready for what may come. We are a match for them, whatever may be their design. To-morrow we will probe this matter to its depths.

2nd Court. Depend upon it, there is no time to lose if we would forestall these fellows. But here comes the procession to the banqueting-hall.

[Citizens *going to banquet two and two.*

Meg. (*with a gold wand*). This way, gentlemen; this way, masters and mistresses; this way, Respectables!

[*Accompanies them to the end of the stage towards the banqueting-hall in the distance. Returns to escort another party.* Musicians, *etc.*

Enter Senators, *two and two.*

Meg. (*bowing profoundly three times*). Most Illustrious Senators! this way, your Highnesses; this way.

Enter MELISSA *and other* Ladies.

(*To* MELISSA) Fairest and loveliest of your adorable sex, your slave prostrates himself before your stainless and beatific feet (*bowing low and kissing his fingers*). Illustrious Ladies, I pray you to advance.

Lys. (*with* Courtiers *standing apart*). A good appetite, my friends. Enjoy yourselves while you may.

Bard. We are quite ready, my Lord Lysimachus. Are you not (*with a sneer*) for the banquet?

Lys. In good time, in good time. If they only knew. [*Aside.*

Bard. (*overhearing*). If *you* knew all, my friends.

Meg. (*returning*). I pray you, most Illustrious Senators, to excuse the absence of a guard of honour.

Bard. Nay, nay; we are peaceful people, and have no armed men nearer than Bosphorus, as my Lord Lysimachus knows. There are plenty in that favoured State, no doubt.

Lys. (*confused*). What does this insolence mean? I would the hour were come.

Enter ZETHO, *with his retinue.*

Meg. Your Gravity, Your Sincerity, Your Sublime and Wonderful Magnitude, Your Illustrious and Magnificent Highness, I prostrate myself before Your Altitude. Will You deign to walk this way?

Zetho. My lord, I am no Cæsar, but a simple citizen of Cherson, called by my fellows to preside over the State. Use not to me these terms, I pray of you, but lead on quickly.

Meg. I prostrate myself before Your Eminence.

Enter ASANDER *and* GYCIA.

Meg. (*returning*). Noble Prince, will your Illustrious Consort and yourself deign to follow me?

Asan. Nay, good Megacles, will you and these gentlemen go first, I have a word to say to the Lady Gycia. We will be with you before the guests are seated.

Meg. I obey, my Lord Asander, and will await you at the door.

[MEGACLES, LYSIMACHUS, *and the rest, pass on.*

Asan. Gycia, though we have passed from amity
And all our former love, yet would I pray you,
By our sweet years of wedded happiness,
Give ear to me a moment. It may be
That some great shock may come to set our lives
For evermore apart.

Gycia. Ah yes, Asander—
For evermore apart!

Asan. And I would fain,
If it must be, that thou shouldst know to-night
That never any woman on the earth
Held me one moment in the toils of love
Except my wife.

Gycia. What! not Irene's self?

Asan. Never, I swear by Heaven. She was a woman
In whom a hopeless passion burnt the springs
Of maiden modesty. I never gave her
The solace of a smile.

Gycia. Dost thou say this?
Is thy soul free from all offence with her,
If thou camest now to judgment?

Asan. Ay, indeed,
Free as a child's.

Gycia. Oh, my own love! my dear!
Ah no! too late, too late!
[*Embraces him.*

Asan. I ask thee not
Counter assurance, since I know thy truth.

Gycia. Speakst thou of Theodorus? He loved me
Before I knew thee, but I loved no man
Before I met Asander. When he knelt
That day, it was in pity for my grief,
Thinking thee false, and all his buried love
Burst into passionate words, which on the instant
I as thy wife repelled.

Asan. Oh, perfect woman!
[*They embrace.*
O God, it is too late! Come, let us go;
The guests are waiting for us. What can Fate
Devise to vanquish Love. [*Exeunt.*

Enter two drunken Labourers *of Cherson, bearing faggots and straw.*

1st Lab. Well, friend, what kind of day has it been with you?

2nd Lab. Oh, a white day, a happy day! Plenty of food, plenty of wine, raree shows without end, such processions as were never seen—the very model of a democracy; nothing to pay, and everybody made happy at the expense of the State. I have lived in Cherson, man and boy, for fifty years, and I never saw anything to compare with it. Here's good luck to Lamachus's memory, say I, and I should like to celebrate his lamented decease as often as his daughter likes.

1st Lab. Didst know him, citizen?

2nd Lab. No, not I. He has been dead these two years. Time he was forgotten, I should think. They don't commemorate poor folk with all these fal-lals and follies.

1st Lab. Well, citizen, there is one comfort—the great people don't enjoy themselves as we do. Did you ever see such a set of melancholy, frowning, anxious faces as the grandees carried with them to-day? And as for the Prince and the Lady Gycia, I don't believe they spoke a word the livelong day, though they walked together. That is the way with these grandees. When you and I quarrel with our wives, it is hammer and tongs for five minutes, and then kiss and make friends.

2nd Lab. And fancy being drilled by that old fool from Bosphorus—"Most Illustrious, this is your proper place;" "Respectable sir, get you back there" (*mimics* MEGACLES), and so forth.

1st Lab. Well, well, it is good to be content. But I warrant we are the only two unhappy creatures in Cherson to-night, who have the ill fortune to be sober. And such wine too, and nothing to pay!

2nd Lab. Never mind, citizen, we shall be paid in meal or malt, I dare say, and we are bound to keep sober. By the way, it is a curiously contrived bonfire this.

1st Lab. It will be the crowning triumph of the whole festival, the senator said.

2nd Lab. But who ever heard of a bonfire on a large scale like this, so close to an old building? You know our orders: we are to place lines of faggots and straw close to the building on every side, well soaked with oil, and certain sealed vessels full of a secret compound in the midst of them. And just before midnight we are to run with torches and set light to the whole bonfire, to amuse the noble guests at the banquet.

[IRENE *at a window, overhearing.*

1st Lab. Ah! do you not see? It is a device of the Senate to startle our friends from Bosphorus. The faggots and straw blaze up fiercely round the wall; then, when all is confusion, the substance in the sealed vessels escapes and at once puts out the fire, and the laugh is with us. Our friends from Bosphorus know what we can do in chemistry before now.

2nd Lab. Faith, a right merry device! Ha! ha! What a head thou hast, citizen! Well, we must go on with our work. Lay the faggots evenly.

Ire. (*at the window above*). Great God! what is this?

We are doomed to die!

Good friends,
Know you my brother, the Lord Theodorus?
I have something urgent I would say to him.
I will write it down, and you shall give it him
When he comes forth from the banquet.
[*Disappears.*

1st Lab. Good my lady. Her brother, too, she calls him. I go bail it is her lover, and this is an assignation. Well, well, we poor men must not be too particular.

2nd Lab. No, indeed; but let us get on with our work, or we shall never finish in time.

Ire. (*reappearing*). Here it is. Give it him, I pray, when he comes forth. 'Tis a thing of life and death.

1st Lab. So they all think, Poor love-sick fools!

Ire. See, here is gold for you— 'Tis all I have; but he will treble it, If you fail not.

1st Lab. Lady, we shall be here, We must be here. Fear not, we shall not miss him.

SCENE II.—THE BANQUET HALL.

At a table, on a dais, ZETHO, ASANDER, GYCIA, *and* Senators; LYSIMACHUS, *and* Courtiers *of Bosphorus.* Magnates *of Cherson at cross tables.* ASANDER, LYSIMACHUS, *the* Courtiers, *and* Senators *seem flushed with wine.*

Zetho. I drink to him whose gracious memory
We celebrate to-day. In all our Cherson,
Which boasts descent from the Athenian race,
Who one time swayed the world, there was no man,
Nor ever had been, fired with deeper love
Of this our city, or more heartfelt pride
In our republican rule (LYSIMACHUS *sneers*), which freeborn men
Prize more than life. I do not seek to bind
Those who, long nurtured under kingly rule,
Give to the Man the love we bear the State;
But never shall the name of King be heard
In this our Cherson.

Lys. Archon, 'twere unwise To risk long prophecies.

Bard. Be silent, sir, If you would not offend.

Zetho, I bid you all Drink to the memory of Lamachus And weal to our Republic.

Lys. Shall we drink Its memory, for it has not long to live, If it be still alive?

Bard. It will outlive thee. *Thou* hast not long to live.

Lys. Longer than thou, If swords be sharp.

Zetho. I pray you, gentlemen, Bandy not angry words.

Gycia. My Lord Asander, Thy cup is empty. Shall I fill it for thee?
Thou lovedst Lamachus?

Asan. Ay, that I did; And I love thee. But I have drunk enough.
I must keep cool to-night.

Gycia. Nay; see, I fill
My glass to drink with thee.
Asan. Well, well, I drink,
But not to the Republic.
Gycia. Ah! my lord,
There is a gulf still yawns 'twixt thee and me
Which not the rapture of recovered love
Can ever wholly bridge. To my dead father
I drink, and the Republic!
Lys. Which is dead.
Bard. Nay, sir, but living, and shall live when thou
Liest rotting with thy schemes.

Enter MEGACLES.

Meg. My Lord Asander,
A messenger from Bosphorus, just landed,
Has bid me give thee this.
[*Gives* ASANDER *letter.*
Asan. (*reading*) "My Lord, the King
Is dead, asking for thee." Oh, wretched day!
Had I but gone to him, and left this place
Of sorrow ere he died!
Gycia. My love, my dear!
Thou wilt go hence too late. I would indeed
The law had let thee go. Sorrow like this
Draws parted lives in one, and knits anew
The rents which time has made.
Lys. The King is dead!
Ay, then long live the King of Bosphorus!
And more ere long!
Bard. Think you that he will live
To wear his crown?
Zetho. Brethren, the hour is late,
And draws to midnight, and 'tis time that all
Should rest for whom rest is. (*To* BARDANES *aside*) We must consider
What change of policy this weighty change
Which makes Asander King may work in us.
Bard. (*aside*). Nay, nay, no change! He is a murderer still,
And shall be punished were he thrice a king.
Asan. Good night to all. And thou, good Megacles,
Thou wert my father's servant, take thy rest.
Go hence with these.
Meg. I have no heart to marshal
These dignitaries forth. My King is dead;
I am growing old and spent.
Zetho. Daughter, remember
Thy duty to the State.
Gycia. I will, good Zetho.
I am my father's daughter. Gentle Sirs
And Ladies all, good night.
[*Exeunt omnes except* ASANDER *and* GYCIA; LYSIMACHUS *and* Courtiers *by one door, then the* Chersonites *by another opposite.*
Asan. Dearest of women,
How well this fair head will become a crown!
I know not how it is, but now this blow
Has fallen, it does not move me as I thought.
I am as those who come in tottering age
Even to life's verge, whom loss of friend or child

Touches not deeply, since the dead they love
Precede them but a stage upon the road
Which they shall tread to-morrow. Yet am I
Young, and thou too, my Gycia; we should walk
The path of life together many years,
But that some strange foreboding troubles me.
For oh, my dear! now that the sun of love
Beams on our days again, my worthless life
Grows precious, and I tremble like a coward
At dangers I despised. Tell me, my Gycia,
Though I am true in love, wouldst thou forgive me
If I were false or seemed false to thy State?
Hast thou no word for me? May I not tell thee
My secret, which so soon all men shall know,
And ask thy pardon for it?

Gycia. Say on, Asander.

Asan. Know, then, that soldiers sent from Bosphorus
Have long time hid within our palace here—
Long time before I knew, or I had nipt
The treason in the bud; and in an hour
Or less from when we speak, they will go forth,
When all the citizens are wrapt in sleep
After the toilsome day, and seize the gates,
And open to the army which lies hid
On board the ships without. They will not shed
The blood of any, since the o'erwhelming force
Will make resistance vain. I never liked
The plot, I swear to thee; but, all being done,
And I a subject, dared not disavow
That which was done without me. But I have forced
A promise that no blood be spilt.

Gycia. Asander,
I have known it all, and have discovered all [ASANDER *starts.*
Thy secret to the Senate! But I knew not,
Save by the faith that is the twin with love,
That thou didst follow only in this plot,
And wert unwilling; and I do rejoice
Thy hands are free from blood. But oh, my love,
Break from these hateful men! Thou art now a King,
Thou canst command. Come, let us fly together;
There yet is time! I tell thee that this plot
Is doomed to ruin. Ere the morning dawns,
All but the guilty leaders will be sent
Prisoners to Bosphorus, and thou with them.
I have gained this on my knees; but for the guilty
The State has punishments.

Asan. Gycia, thou wouldst not
That I should break my faith? 'Tis a King's part
To keep faith, though he die. But when they have seized
The city, then, using my kingly office,
I will undo the deed, and make alliance

With Cherson, and this done I will depart,
Taking my Queen with me.
Gycia. Then must I go;
I cannot live without thee.
Asan. Now to rest,
If not to sleep.
Gycia. Good night, my love; farewell.
Asan. Nay, not farewell, my love!
Gycia. Ah yes, farewell!
Farewell! farewell for ever! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—OUTSIDE THE BANQUET HALL. DARKNESS.

GYCIA *hurriedly descends the steps, closing the great doors of the banquet hall softly.*

Gycia. I hear no sound within; the lights are gone,
And all the hall is dark. These doors alone
Of all the many outlets of the palace
Remain unlocked. There is not now a moment
To lose ere midnight comes, and here I hold
The safety of our Cherson. Oh, my love!
I could not tell thee all, nor recompense
Thy faith in me, since duty held me fast—
My duty, which should also prove thy safety,
For now the solemn promise of the State
Is pledged to hold thee harmless, and defeat
The shameful plot I knew was never thine,
Without one drop of bloodshed. All my path
Shows clear as noonday, and I save our city
And those who with thee err in innocence.
Why do I hesitate? Yet does some dark
And dreadful presage of impending ill
So haunt me that I know not how to face it.
I dare not do it. I must stay with him,
Or bring him forth with me.
[*Ascends the steps, throws open the doors, and finds all darkness and silence.*
Asander! husband!
It is thy wife who calls! Come forth, Asander! [*Listens.*
Nay, there is no one there. I cannot stay;
This is mere folly. I must keep my word;
There's not a moment's time, or all is lost.
Which is the key?
[*Closes the doors and locks them with a clang.*
I must go forth alone
To the Senate-chamber. I have saved our Cherson
And my Asander!
[*Totters down the steps and exit hurriedly.*

SCENE IV.—THE SENATE-CHAMBER.

ZETHO *and* Senators; *afterwards* GYCIA.

Zetho. What is the hour?
Bardanes. It wants five minutes only
To midnight. Think you she will come?

Zetho. I know her.
She is the soul of honour, and would keep
Her word if 'twere her death.
Bard. But would she keep it
If 'twere her lover's?
Zetho. She thinks not that it is,
Nor should it be, indeed, were we but true
As I believe her.
Bard. True! There is no truth
In keeping faith with murderers; they must perish
In the same net which they laid privily
Against a faithful city.

Enter GYCIA, *tottering in, with the keys.*

Zetho. Hail, noble daughter! Thou hast saved the State.
I knew thou wouldst not fail us.
Gycia. See, good Zetho,
The proof that I have done my part to you.
There are the master keys of all the doors
Within the palace. When I closed the last,
A few brief minutes since, there was no sound
Nor light in hall or chamber; every court
Was silent as the grave.
Bard. Ay, as the grave
It is, or will be soon.
Gycia. What mean you, sir,
I pray you? I am but a timid woman,
Full of foreboding fears and dread of ill,
And such a doubt doth overspread my soul,
Hearing thy words, I think I shall go mad.
Nay, Zetho, he is safe; I have your promise
Thou wouldst not harm him. An o'erwhelming force,
Thou saidst, should so surround them that resistance
Were vain, and ere the dawn they should go hence
Without one drop of bloodshed.
Zetho. Ay, my daughter,
Such was the promise.
Bard. And it will be kept.
[*Bell strikes midnight.*
Hark, 'tis the hour! An overwhelming force
[*A red glare rising higher and higher is seen through the windows of the Senate-chamber. Confused noise and shouts heard without.*
Surrounds them, but no drop of blood is shed.
All will go hence ere dawn.
Gycia. Oh, cruel man,
And most perfidious world! Oh, my Asander!
To die thus and through me!
[*A violent knocking is heard at the door.*

Enter THEODORUS *in great agitation and* IRENE, *who throws herself on her knees, weeping.* GYCIA *falls swooning in* ZETHO'S *arms.*

Zetho. Whence com'st thou, Theodorus?
Theo. Straight, my lord
From Gycia's palace.
Zetho. Say, what didst thou there?
And what of horror has befallen thee
That makes thine eyes stare thus?
Theo. Most noble Zetho,
When from the banquet scarce an hour ago

I passed, came one who offered me a letter
And bade me read. 'Twas from this woman here,
My sister, and it told of some great peril
By fire, which she, within the prison locked,
Expected with the night. Wherefore I sped
With one I trusted, and did set a ladder
Against her casement, calling her by name,
And bidding her descend. But no voice came,
And all was dark and silent as the grave;
And when I called again, the Prince Asander,
From an adjacent casement looking, cried,
"I had forgot thy sister. Take her hence;
She should go free!" And then, at her own casement
[GYCIA *revives and listens.*
Appearing, he came forth, and in his arms
A woman's senseless form. As they descended
And now were in mid-air, there came the sound
Of the bell striking midnight, and forthwith
In a moment, like a serpent winged with fire,
There rose from wall to wall a sheet of flame,
Which in one instant mounted to the roof
With forked red tongues. Then every casement teemed
With strange armed men, who leapt into the flames
And perished. Those who, maimed and burnt, escaped,
Ere they could gain their feet, a little band
Of citizens, who sprang from out the night,
Slew as they lay. The Prince, who bore my sister
Unhurt to ground, stood for a moment mute.
Then, seeing all was lost, he with a groan
Stabbed himself where we stood. I fear his hurt
Is mortal, since in vain I tried to staunch
The rushing blood; then bade them on a litter
Carry him hither gently. Here he comes.

Enter Citizens, *bearing* ASANDER *on a litter, wounded.*

Gycia. Oh, my love, thou art hurt! Canst thou forgive me?
I thought to save thee and the rest. I knew not,
I did not know! Oh, God!
Asan. I do believe thee.
The fates have led our feet by luckless ways
Which only lead to death. I loved but thee.
I wished thy State no wrong, but I am dying.
Farewell! my love, farewell! [*Dies.*
Gycia. Oh, my lost love!
[*Throws herself on the body and kisses it passionately.*
Zetho. Poor souls! Mysterious are the ways of Heaven,

And these have suffered deeply in the fortune
That bound their lives together.
Bard. That dead man
Would have betrayed our State, and thou dost pity!
So perish all the enemies of Cherson!
Gycia (rising). Nay, sir, be silent. 'Tis a coward's part
To vilify the dead. You, my Lord Zetho,
I had your promise that you would hurt none
Except the guilty only, and I thought
That to your word I might entrust my life
And one more dear than mine; but now it seems
That in some coward and unreasoning panic
This worthy Senator has moved his colleagues—
Since cruelty is close akin to fear—
To break your faith to me, and to confuse
The innocent and guilty, those who led
And those who followed, in one dreadful death!
I pray you pardon me if, being a woman,
Too rashly taking part in things of State,
I have known nought of State-craft or the wisdom
Which breaks a plighted word.
Zetho. Daughter, I would
Our promise had been kept, and I had kept it
But that the safety of the State to some
Seemed to demand its breach.
Gycia. Farewell, good Zetho,
And all who were my friends. I am going hence;
I can no longer stay. There lies my love.
There flames my father's house. I go far off,
A long, long journey. If you see me not
In life again, I humbly pray the State
May, if it think me worthy—for indeed
I have given it all—bury me, when I die,
Within the city, in a fair white tomb,
As did our Grecian forefathers of old
For him who saved the State; and, if it may be,
Lay my love by my side.
Zetho and Sens. Daughter, we swear
That thou shalt have thy wish.
Gycia. I thank you, sirs.
Then, I may go. Kiss me, good Theodorus:
I am no more a wife. I know thy love,
And thank thee for it. For that wretch whose lie
Has wrecked our life and love, I bless the gods
That I am childless, lest my daughter grew
As vile a thing as she; and yet I know not.
She loved him in some sort, poor wretch, poor wretch!
But now I must be going. 'Tis past midnight;
[*Snatches a dagger from* THEODORUS'S *side.*

I must go hence. I have lost my life and love,
But I have saved the State.
[*Stabs herself and falls on* ASANDER'S *body.*

Citizens *of Cherson bursting in.*

Cits. The State is saved! Long may our Cherson flourish!

The State is saved! Long live our Lady Gycia,
Who saved the State!

Gycia (*rising a little*). Yes, I have saved the State!
[*Falls back dead.*

Citizens (*without*). Long live the Lady Gycia!

Curtain.

SONGS OF BRITAIN.

ON A THRUSH SINGING IN AUTUMN.

SWEET singer of the Spring, when the new world
Was filled with song and bloom, and the fresh year
Tripped, like a lamb playful and void of fear,
Through daisied grass and young leaves scarce unfurled,
Where is thy liquid voice
That all day would rejoice?
Where now thy sweet and homely call,
Which from gray dawn to evening's chilling fall
Would echo from thin copse and tasselled brake,
For homely duty tuned and love's sweet sake?

The spring-tide passed, high summer soon should come.
The woods grew thick, the meads a deeper hue;
The pipy summer growths swelled, lush and tall;
The sharp scythes swept at daybreak through the dew.
Thou didst not heed at all,
Thy prodigal voice grew dumb;
No more with song mightst thou beguile,
She sitting on her speckled eggs the while,
Thy mate's long vigil as the slow days went,
Solacing her with lays of measureless content.

Nay, nay, thy voice was Duty's, nor would dare
Sing were Love fled, though still the world were fair;
The summer waxed and waned, the nights grew cold,
The sheep were thick within the wattled fold,
The woods began to moan,
Dumb wert thou and alone;
Yet now, when leaves are sere, thy ancient note
Comes low and halting from thy doubtful throat.

Oh, lonely loveless voice, what dost thou here
In the deep silence of the fading year?

Thus do I read the answer of thy song:
"I sang when winds blew chilly all day long;
I sang because hope came and joy was near,
I sang a little while, I made good cheer;
In summer's cloudless day
My music died away;
But now the hope and glory of the year
Are dead and gone, a little while I sing
Songs of regret for days no longer here,
And touched with presage of the far-off Spring."

Is this the meaning of thy note, fair bird?
Or do we read into thy simple brain
Echoes of thoughts which human hearts have stirred,
High-soaring joy and melancholy pain?
Nay, nay, that lingering note
Belated from thy throat—
"Regret," is what it sings, "regret, regret!
The dear days pass, but are not wholly gone.
In praise of those I let my song go on;
'Tis sweeter to remember than forget."

IN A COUNTRY CHURCH.

THE organ peals, the people stand,
The white procession through the aisles,
As is our modern use, defiles
In ranks, which part on either hand.

They chant the psalms with resonant voice
These peasants of our Saxon Kent;
With the old Hebrew king rejoice,
With him grow contrite and repent.

But when the pale priest, blandly cold,
White-winged above the eagle bends,
I lose the ancient words of old,
The monotone which still ascends.

For there the village school is set,
A row of shining faces bright,
Round cheeks by time unwrinkled yet,
Smooth heads, and boyish collars white.

And through the row there runs a smile,
Like sunlight on a rippling sea—
A childish mirth, devoid of guile;
What may the merry movement be?

The teachers frown; not far to seek
The wonder seems, for it is this:
A little scholar whose round cheek
A stain of gules appears to kiss.

For some low shaft of wintry sun
Strikes where Dame Dorothy of the Grange,
In long devotions never done,
Kneels on through centuries of change.

And from her robe's unfading rose,
Athwart the fair heads ranged below,
A ruddy shaft at random goes,
And lights them with unwonted glow.

And straightway all the scene by these
Grows dim for me; I heed no more
The preacher's smooth monotonies,
The chants repeated o'er and o'er.

For I am borne on fancy's wings
Far from the Present to the Past;

From those which pass to those which last,
The root and mystery of Things.

How many an old and vanished day,
Has gone, she kneeling there the while,
And watching, with her saintly smile,
The generations fade away.

The children came each Sunday there
To hear the self-same chant and hymn;
The boys grew strong, the girls grew fair,
Their lives with fleeting years grew dim.

Their children's children came and went,
She kneeling in the self-same prayer;
They passed to withered age, and bent,
And left the Lady kneeling there.

They passed, and on the churchyard ground
No more their humble names are seen;
Only upon the billowy mound
Yearly the untrodden grass grows green.

They grew, they waned through toil and strife,
From innocence to guilt and sin;
They gained what prize was theirs to win,
They sank in shame the load of life.

And still the kneeling Lady calm
Throws gules on many a childish head,
And still the self-same prayers are said,
The self-same chant, the self-same psalm.

So had they been, before as yet,
Her far-off grandsires lived and died,
Ere long descent had nourished pride,
Before the first Plantagenet.

No change, unless some change there were
In simpler rite or grayer stone,
The self-same worship never done,
And for its very age grown fair.

Great God, the creatures of Thy hand,
Must they thus fail for ever still
Thy high behests to understand,
To seek and find Thy hidden will?

Are Thy hands slow to succour then?
And are Thy eyes, then, slow to see
The toiling, tempted race of men
Born into sin and misery?

For nineteen centuries of Time,
Nay more, for dim unnumbered years,
Men's eyes have sought Thy face sublime,
And turned uncomforted, in tears.

For countless years unsullied youth
Has sunk through grosser mire of sense;
And yet men cherish innocence!
And yet we are no nearer truth!

And not the less from age to age
Heavenward the unchanging suffrage rolls
From hearts inspired by holy rage,
And meek and uncomplaining souls,

Who see no cloud of doubt o'erspread
The far horizons of the sky,
But view with clear, unfailing eye
The mansions of the happy dead.

Oh, wonder! oh, perplexèd thought!
Oh, interchange of good and ill!
In vain, by life's long pain untaught,
We strive to solve the riddle still.

In vain, so mixed the twofold skein,
That none the tangle may unwind;
Where one the gate of Heaven may find,
Another shrinks in hopeless pain.

So here the immemorial sum
Of simple reverence may breed
A finer worship than might come
For fruit of some severer creed.

Kneel, Lady, blazoned in thy place!
Through generations children kneel.
To know is weaker than to feel:
Though Truth seem far, we know her face!

IN SPRING-TIDE.

THIS is the hour, the day,
The time, the season sweet.
Quick! hasten, laggard feet,
Brook not delay;
Love flies, youth passes, Maytide will not last;
Forth, forth, while yet 'tis time, before the Spring is past.

The Summer's glories shine
From all her garden ground,
With lilies prankt around,
And roses fine;
But the pink blooms or white upon the bursting trees,
Primrose and violet sweet, what charm has June like these?

This is the time of song.
From many a joyous throat,
Mute all the dull year long,
Soars love's clear note;
Summer is dumb, and faint with dust and heat;
This is the mirthful time when every sound is sweet.

Fair day of larger light,
Life's own appointed hour,
Young souls bud forth in white—
The world's a-flower;
Thrill, youthful heart; soar upward, limpid voice;
Blossoming time is come—rejoice, rejoice, rejoice!

IN AUTUMN.

"DECAY, decay," the wildering west winds cry,
"Decay, decay," the moaning woods reply;
The whole dead autumn landscape, drear and chill,
Strikes the same chord of desolate sadness still.
The drifting clouds, the floods a sullen sea,
The dead leaves whirling from the ruined tree,
The rain which falling soaks the sodden way,
Proclaim the parting summer's swift decay.
No song of bird, nor joyous sight or thing
Which smooths the wintry forefront of the spring;
No violet lurking in its mossy bed,
Nor drifted snow-bloom bending overhead,
Nor kingcups carpeting the meads with gold,
Nor tall spiked orchids purpling all the wold;

But thin dull herbage which no more may grow,
And dry reeds rustling as the chill winds blow,
Bleak hillsides whence the huddled flocks are fled,
And every spear of crested grass lies dead.
"Decay, decay," the leafless woodlands sigh,
The torpid earth, and all the blinded sky,
And down the blurred moor, 'mid the dying day,
An age-worn figure limps its weary way.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

FAR in the west sinks down the Sun
On bars of violet and gold,
A soft breeze springs up fresh and cold,
And darkness a transparent pall
Upon the waiting earth begins to fall,
And, decked with lucent gems of orbèd light,
Walks forth the sable Night,
And once again the unfailing miracle is done.

Ineffable, illimitable, immense,
Wonder of wonders, mystery of Space,
How can a finite vision meet thy face?
How shall not our poor eyes, dazzled and dim,
Which see but thy vast circle's outward rim,
Sink touched before thy gaze with impotence?
How shall our feeble voices dare to hymn
Thy infinite glories—voices which were best
To mortal loves and earth's poor joys addrest?
How seek our earthly limits to transcend,
And, without halt or pause,
Soaring beyond the limit of our laws,
Touch with a feeble hand on glories without end?

Nay, great are these indeed
And infinite, but not so great as He
Their Maker who has formed them, who made me,
Who can in fancy leap, outward and outward still
Beyond our System and its farthest star,
Beyond the greater Systems ranged afar,
To which our faintest suns are satellites, and no more—
Beyond, beyond, beyond, and strive to fill
The illimitable void which never sense
Nor thought alone may compass or contain,
Then with a whirling brain
Return to the great Centre of all light,
Which doth control and bound the Infinite,
And, looking to the undiscovered Sun,
Find all perplexity and longing done,
And am content to wonder and to adore.

This 'tis alone
Which doth console and soothe our feeble thought,
Faint with the too great strain to comprehend
A Universe, which owns nor source nor end.
Wherever through the boundless wastes we stray,
For ever and for ever, some faint ray

Of the great central Sun, the hidden Will,
Attends our wanderings still;
Beyond the utmost limits of the sky,
Unseen, yet seen, the gaze of an Eternal Eye.
No waste of systems lies around,
But a great Rule by which all things are bound.
A changeless order circles sun with sun;
One great Will pulses through, and makes them one.
System on system, vast or small,
One great Intelligence directs them all.
No longer from the endless maze we shrink,
Like those who on some sea-cliff's dreadful brink
Long to fling down into the empty air
And lose the pain of living, and to be
Sunk in the deep abysses of the sea;
To lose the pain of living and the care,
Which dogs life like its shadow.
Nay, no dread
Have we who know a great Sun overhead,
Which shines upon us always, unbeheld.
How should our eyes behold what is too great
our imperfect state?
How should our minds reach to it; how attain
With a too feeble brain,
To comprehend the Unbounded, the Immense,
Incomprehensible by finite sense?—
How through the Finite view the Infinite,
Except by this clear Light?

That is the light, indeed,
Which lights all souls which come upon the earth.
That is the central Sun which on our birth
Shone, and will shine upon us till the end;
A central Will which holds the worlds in space;
A Presence, though we look not on its face,
Which sows a cosmic order through the waste of things;
A Being, all the beatings of whose wings
Are secular wastes of Time; of whose great soul
Creations are but moods, in whose vast mind
Antinomies of Thought repose combined,
Till those which seem to us as changeless laws
Show but as phases of the Unchanging Cause,
And we and all things fade and pass away,
Lost in the effulgence of the Boundless Day.

Let, then, unbounded Space,
Sown thick with worlds, encompass us; we care
No whit for it, nor shall our dazzled eyes
This waste of Worlds surprise,
Which have looked on its Maker, who is more
Than all his work can be, but not the less
Dwells in each human soul that looks on Him
Albeit with vision dim;
Whose constant Presence all our lives confess,
Of whom we are a part, and closer far
Than is the furthest, most unmeasured star,

Than are His great suns, big with fruitful strife,
Seeing that we are a portion of His Life,
Seeing that we hold His Essence—some clear spark,
Which shines when all creation else grows dark,
And are, however impotent and small,
One with the Will that made and governs all.

* * * *

And now the night grows thin;
A subtle air of newness seems to stir
Before the dawn, as if its harbinger
To prisoned souls within,
Proclaiming the near coming of the day.
Then Darkness, a great bird, with raven wing,
Flies to the furthest west, and in her stead
Young Day, an orient conqueror overhead,
Looks down, and all that waste of worlds has fled;
And once again the Eternal, mystic Birth
Is born upon the earth,
And once again the round of wholesome life,
The doubt-dispelling stir and joyous strife,
Chases the dreadful visions of the night,
Lost in the increasing light;
And from the spheres a still voice seems to say,
"Awake, arise, adore, behold the Day!
It is enough to be, nor question why;
It is enough to work our work and die;
It is enough to feel and not to know.
Behold, the Dawn is breaking; let us go."

AN ENGLISH IDYLL.

ONCE I remember, in a far-off June,
Leaving the studious cloister of my youth,
Beside the young Thames' stream I laid me down,
Wearied, upon a bank. 'Twas mid-summer;
The warm earth teemed with flowers; the kingcup's gold,
The perfumed clover, 'mid the crested grass,
The plantains rearing high their flowery crowns
Above the daisied coverts; overhead,
The hawthorns, white and rosy, bent with bloom,
The broad-spread chestnuts spiked with frequent flowers,
And white gold-hearted lilies on the stream;
All these made joy within my heart, and woke
The fair idyllic phantasies of Greece;
And dreaming, well content with the rich charm
Of summer England, long I idly mused:
"And were the deep-set vales of Thessaly
Or fair Olympian beech-groves more than this?
Or the Sicilian meads more rich in flowers,
Where the lost goddess plucked the asphodel?
Or flowed the clear stream through a lovelier shade
Where Dian bathed and rapt Actæon saw?
Or were they purer depths where Hylas played

Till the nymphs drew him down? Ah, fairer dreams
Than our poor England holds! Grave, toil-worn land!
Poor aged mother of a graceless brood,
With shambling gait and limbs by labour bent!
What should she know of such?"
When straight I heard
A ripple of boyish mirth, and looking saw
Far off along the meads a gliding boat
Float noiselessly; lithe forms at either end—
The self-same forms which Phidias fixed of old—
With tall poles, pressed it forward, others lay
Reclined, and all had crowned their short smooth hair
With lilies from the stream, while one had shaped
Some hollow reed in semblance of a pipe,
Making a shrill faint sound—a joyous crew,
Clothed with the grace of innocent nakedness.
Then, while they yet were far, ere yet a sound
Of their poor rustic tones assailed the sense,
Or too great nearness marred the grace of form——

Poised sudden in a white row, side by side,
They plunged down headlong in the sweet warm tide.
Then, as I went, within myself I said,
"The young Apollo is not wholly fled,
Nor can long centuries of toil and care
Make youth less comely or the earth less fair.
To the world's ending Joy and Grace shall be.
I, too, have been to-day in Arcady."

ANIMA MUNDI.

Oh great World-Spirit, wherefore art thou come?
We crave an answer, but thy voice is dumb.

Oh great World-Spirit, whither dost thou tend?
By what dark paths to what mysterious end?

We do not know, we cannot tell at all,
Only before thy onward march we fall.

* * * *

Nay, but before thy throne we fall, we kneel;
We crave not that thy face thou shouldst reveal;
We do not seek to know, only to feel.

We praise thee not in words our tongues can tell;
Though thy hand slay us, we will not rebel.
Whate'er thy will design for us, 'tis well.

Compute our lives with all thy boundless past,
Project them on thy abysmal Future vast;
Only let all be merged in Thee at last.

IN PEMBROKESHIRE, 1886.

THROUGH crested grass I took my way
From my loved home. The sun was high;
The warm air slept the live-long day;
No shadowy cloudlet veiled the sky.

The swift train swept with rhythmic tune,
By endless pastures hurrying down,
White farm, lone chapel, castled town,
Then, fringed with weed, the salt lagune.

And last the land-locked haven blue,
Thin-sown with monstrous works of war,
And on the sweet salt air I knew
Faint sounds of cheering from afar.

* * * *

Strong arms and backs are bent, and then
They draw us up the fluttering street;
Behind, there comes the ordered beat
Of long-drawn files of marching men.

At last a halt; a steep hillside
Set thick with toil-worn workers strong,
Grave faces stretching far and wide,
Fired with the hope to banish wrong.

Ah me! how thin one voice appears,
To reach so many eager minds!
Nay, for it speaks to willing ears,
And what the hearer seeks he finds.

Unhappy Island of the West!
Thy brethren these in race and blood,
Not like thee tempted or opprest,
But filled with longing for thy good.

For just is manhood rude and strong
And generous the toiler's soul;
When these the ship of State control,
Oppression shall not flourish long.

* * * *

The crowds are gone, the hillside bare,
The last good-nights at length are said,
The harbour crossed again, the fair
Large star of eve hangs overhead.

The shades of tardy evening fall;
Lights come in casements here and there;
Through dewy meads on the cool air
The wandering landrails hoarsely call.

The silent roads loom ghostly white;
No veil of darkness hides the skies;
A sunless dawn appears to rise
Upon the stilly charmèd night.

The day's hot concourse comes to seem
Far, far away; the eager crowd,
The upturned gaze, the plaudits loud,
In the cool silence like a dream.

And oh, sweet odours, which the air
Of the calm summer midnight deep
Draws from the rose which lies asleep,
And bowery honeysuckles fair.

Oh, perfumed night! Some tremulous bird
From the thick hedgerows seems to thrill.
No other sound but this is heard,
Save ringing horsehoofs, beating still.

Midnight is past; there comes a gleam,
Precursor of the scarce-set sun.
Through gray streets hushed as in a dream
We sweep, and the long day is done.

* * * *

Men pass, but still shall Nature keep
Her night's cool calm, her dawn's bright glow;
Unseen her fragrant wild flowers creep,
Unmarked her midnight odours blow.

The long injustices of years
Shall pass; the hapless Western Isle
Shall dry the age-long trace of tears,
And show instead a happy smile.

The wheels of Fate are swiftly borne
From point to point, from change to change;
What yesterday was new and strange;
To-morrow scouts as old and worn.

I may forget the shouting crowd,
The sea of eyes which upward turn,
The kindling cheeks, the plaudits loud,
The sympathies which glow and burn.

Ay, all things change, but hardly those
Shall fade—the midnight calm of June,
The cool sweet airs, the night-bird's tune,
The perfume of the sleeping rose.

EASTER-TIDE.

Awake, arise, oh Earth!
Thy hour has come at last;
The winter's ruin past,
Spring comes to birth.
The virgin world with flowers again grows bright,
And in the increasing light
Doth clothe herself with beauty; once again
A new creation issues with a stately train.

Oh soul of man, arise
And keep thy Easter-tide,
White clothed as is a bride,
With calm pure eyes;
When all things living else rejoice,
Not thine should be the voice
Alone to keep dull silence, mute, unheard,
Amid the joy that wakens every nesting bird.

'Tis an old Spring of mirth
That bids our souls arise;
No other moved the priests and augurs wise
Upon the younger earth
When for the Passover the lamb was slain,
Nor when they did complain
Of old time for the fair Adonis dead,
Greeting with tears of joy that dear recovered head.

The same, yet not the same,
Joy fuller, deeper grief
Than in the old ages came
To wake belief.
The Spring our voices celebrate to-day
Is not the Spring which fades with May,
Nor that renewal ours which shall be done
Soon as our earth leans outward from the averted sun.

Nor as theirs is our loss
Who wept the enamoured boy;
Ours is a heavier cross,
A livelier joy,
Mixed in such sort with grief that one is bred
From the other and by it nourished,

So that without the salutary pain
Were no place left for this triumphant gain.

Great Law of Sacrifice
On which our lives are built,
That with our load of guilt
Soars to the skies,
I doubt if ever there was race of man
But based its life on such a mystic plan,
From old Prometheus' godlike treachery
To calm Osiris cold and sad Persephone.

Therefore, because the end
Of Winter comes and Death,
Our yearning souls ascend,
Faith quickeneth.
How should it be that man alone could cease
When all things else increase?
Man, the first fruit of Time, Creation's crown—
Shall he, while all is Spring, lie hopeless and cast down?

Ay, always with the Spring
The waking comes again;
Mixed tones of joy and pain
Our life-chords sing.
Sweet are the songs of autumn, sweet of death,
And bitter sweet the first-drawn breath,
And sweet, though full of pain, the mortal strife
When from Death's grasp we struggle into Life.

That is the law of life—
Joy bought by sacrifice,
Pleasure for hopeless sighs,
And rest for strife.
The earth is no more, as it was at first,
By some strange spell accurst;
A mystery has passed a mystery,
A boundless hope has bid new heavens and earth to be.

Rise, happy Earth, arise,
Thy wintry darkness done,
To greet the new-risen sun
Oh soul, arise!
The joy which stirs the world let it wake thee.
A symbol of thy risen life is born.
Awake, arise! this is the very morn;
A mystery has been! a mystery!

GHOSTS.

SOMETIMES in some forsaken place,
Hid from the aspect of the sun,
We come on some forgotten trace
Of life and years long dead and done.

Some faded picture's doubtful truth,
Fixed in the springtime of our days,
Which through all change of mien portrays
The evanescent charm of youth—

The rounded cheek, the wealth of hair,
The bright young eye's unclouded blue.
White head, wan face, were you thus fair?
Sad eyes, and were these ever you?

Changed, and yet still unchanged through change,
The self-same lives for good or ill,
Thin ghosts with features known, yet strange,
Of us who live and travail still.

Thin ghosts! or is it we who fade
And are deceased, and keep no more

Than some thin unsubstantial shade
Of the young hopes and fears of yore?

Who knows what Life, or Death, or Time
Are in themselves, or whither tend
The great world's footsteps slow, sublime,
From what dim source—to what hidden end?

Or if our growth be but decay,
Or if all Life must wax and grow,
Or if no change true Being know,
Though all things outward pass away?

Ah! not in outward things we know
The chiefest work of Time and Change;
But new faiths come, old thoughts grown strange,
Old longings which no more may glow.

Some time-stained sheaf of youthful verse,
Some inarticulate yearning dumb,
Once dear, ere time and age had come
To turn the better to the worse.

In these the gazer starts to see
A self, not his, reflected most,
And asking, "Were these part of me?"
Knows he has looked upon a ghost.

SONG.

Love took my life and thrilled it
Through all its strings,
Played round my mind and filled it
With sound of wings,
But to my heart he never came
To touch it with his golden flame.

Therefore it is that singing
I do rejoice,
Nor heed the slow years bringing
A harsher voice,
Because the songs which he has sung
Still leave the untouched singer young.

But whom in fuller fashion
The Master sways,
For him, swift winged with passion,
Fleet the brief days.
Betimes the enforcèd accents come,
And leave him ever after dumb.

FROM WILD WALES.

I.

LLYN Y MORWYNION.

By fair Festiniog, 'mid the Northern Hills,
The vales are full of beauty, and the heights,
Thin-set with mountain sheep, show statelier far
Than in the tamèr South. There the stern round
Of labour rules,—a silent land, sometimes
Loud with the blast that buffets all the hills
Whereon the workers toil, in quarries hewn
Upon the terraced rocksides. Tier on tier,

Above the giddy depths, they edge and cling
Like flies to the sheer precipice as they strike
The thin cleft slate. For solace of their toil
Song comes to strengthen them; and songlike verse
In the old Cymric measures, and the dream
Of fame when all the listening thousands round
Are ranged in Session, and the rapt array
Expectant of the singer's soaring voice,
Or full quire rising thund'rous to the skies,
The sheathed swords, and the sacred Chair of oak,
Where sits the Bard. But most of all they prize
Old memories of the Past, forgotten feuds,
And battles long ago. One tale they tell
Of a deep tarn upon the mountain side,
Llyn y Morwynion called, — "The Maidens' Lake;"
And thus it is the fair old story runs.

On Arvon once the men of Meirion,
Being alone, nor having hearth or home,
Swooped down when all her warriors were afield
Against the foemen. And they snatched from them
The flower of all the maidens of the race,
And to their mountain fastness far away
Bare them unchecked. There with great care and love
They tended them, and in the captives' hearts
The new observance slowly ousted all
The love of home and country, till they stayed
Content, forgetting all their lives before,
Parents and kinsfolk, everything but love.

But when the war was ended, and their arms
Set free, the men of Arvon sent demand
That they should straight restore to home and kin
The maidens they had rapt. Then came great doubt
Upon the men of Meirion, knowing well
Their strength too weak to match the Arvonian hosts
In unassisted war; heralds they sent
To Arvon asking peace, making amends
For what had been their fault. But the others nursed
Deep anger in their hearts, and to their words
Made only answer, "Give ye back untouched
Our daughters and our sisters, whom your fraud
Has stolen from us, or prepare to die."
Then they, taking deep counsel with themselves,
Swore not for life itself would they return
The women, only if themselves should will
To leave them; and they made request of them
That they might know their wish. But when they sought
To question them, they answered with one voice—

"We will not go; for barren is the lot
Of maidenhood, and cold the weary fate
Of loveless lives, the household tasks whose weight
Bears down the childless woman. Since we came
We have known life in the full light of home.
Say to our sires and brothers, that we stay
Willing, and bid our young men that they wive
From out some noble tribe; for thus it is
Our Cymric race grows strong. But do ye bid
Our mothers comfort them, for they shall take
Their grandsons on their knees; for we are wed
And cannot more return. Not Fate itself
Can e'er recall the irrevocable Past."

But when the men of Arvon heard the hest
The herald brought, their souls were wroth in them
Against the ravishers, whose cunning wiles
Had worked such wrong. They called their warriors forth
From every hill and dale, and marched in haste
To Meirion. And they summoned them to yield,
But they refused; and so the fight was set
For the morrow, on the margin of a mere
Deep down within the circuit of the hills.

There, with the sun, within a close-set pass
The men of Meirion stood, a scanty band,
Waiting the approaching host. With grief and pain
They left their loves, and swift, with breaking day,
Marched with unfaltering steps, without a word,
To the field of honour, as men go who know
That all beside is lost. But as they stood,
Ranged in stern silence, waiting for the fray,
They saw a white procession thread the pass
Behind, now seen, now lost, by flowery bends,
Gorse gold and heather purple. At their head
Blodeuwedd, she the flower in face and form
By magic formed, by magic art foredoomed
To sin and suffer. Then again they knew
The bitterness of death, and clasped once more
The forms they loved, when by the lake the sun
Lit the fierce light of countless marching spears.

Then with a last embrace the tearful throng
Withdrew to where above the fastness rose
A purple slope. No way the assailing host
Might find to it while yet one stalwart arm

Of Meirion lived. Toward the lake it fell,
Till in a sheer, precipitous cliff it sank,
Its base in the unfathomable deep.

Now, while the maidens like a fleece of cloud
Whitened the hill, or like a timid flock
From nearer danger shrinking, swift there came
Along the grassy margin of the lake
The countless spears of Arvon. And their sires
And brethren saw them, and great wrath and joy
Fired them and urged them onward, till they surged
And broke on Meirion. But her strong sons stood
And flung them backward; and the frightened throng
Of white-robed suppliants saw the deed, and feared,
Hiding their eyes, hovering 'twixt hope and fear,
Divided 'twixt their lovers and their kin.

All day the battle raged, from morn to eve;
All day the men of Arvon charged and broke,
And charged again the little band which stood
Unshaken in the pass, but hourly grew
Weaker and weaker still. But at the last
The noise of battle ceased awhile; the shouts,
The cries, grew silent. On the purple hill
The kneeling women saw the Arvonian host
Retreating with their dead, and rose to go
With succour to their lovers. As they gazed,
Sudden, as with a last despairing strength
And a hoarse shout, again, a torrent of steel,
The men of Arvon, by their own weight pressed,
Burst on the scant defenders of the pass;
Like some fierce surge which from the storm-vext sea,
Through narrow inlets fenced by rocky walls,
Lifts high its furious crest, and sweeps in ruin
Within the rayless, haunted ocean caves,
Rocks, wreckage, and the corpses of the dead.

And as the women, impotent to save,
With agonizing hands and streaming eyes
Looked down upon the pass, they saw their loves
Driven back, o'erwhelmed, surrounded, flashing swords
And thrusting spears and broken shields, and heard
The noise of desperate battle, then a pause
And silence, as the last of Meirion's sons
Sank in his blood and the long fight was done.

Then suddenly, ere yet the conquering host
Might climb to them, Blodeuwedd, standing clothed
In her unearthly beauty, faced the throng

Of shrinking women. Not a word she spake.
The sinking sun upon her snowy robe
Shone with unearthly gold; like some fair bird
Leading the flock she showed. With one white arm
She pointed to the dreadful pass where lay
The thick-piled corpses, with the other signed
Toward the sheer cliff, and to the lake beneath
Motioned. One word she uttered — "Follow me,"
And all who heard it knew and shared her mind.

Then looking to the heavens, she hurried down
Through thyme and heather, chanting some wild hymn
To the Immortal Gods; and with her went
The white-robed throng, and when they gained the verge,
Without a pause, plunged through the empty air
Into the unfathomed depths, like some great flight
Of white birds swooping from a sea-cliff down
To ocean. The still waters leapt in foam;
One loud shriek only woke the air, and then
Silence was over all, and night and death.

Still sometimes, when the dreaming peasants go
By the lone mountain tarn at shut of day,
The white clouds with the eve descending swift
Down the steep hillside to the lake may seem
The white-robed maidens falling, and the shriek
Of night birds, fair Blodeuwedd and her train;
And fancy, by the ancient fable fed,
Turns from the duller Present's dust and glare
To the enchanted twilights of the Past.

II.

THE PHYSICIANS OF MYDDFAI.

FAR, far away in wild Wales, by the shore of the boundless Atlantic,
Where the cloud-capt peaks of the North are dwarfed to the hills of the South,
And through the long vale to the sea, the full-fed, devious Towy
Turns and returns on itself, like the coils of a silvery snake,
A grey town sits up aloft on the bank of the clear, flowing river,
As it has sat since the days when the Roman was first in the land.
A town, with a high ruined castle and walls mantled over with ivy,
With church towers square and strong and narrow irregular streets,
And, frequent in street and lane, many-windowed high-shouldered chapels,

Whence all the still Sabbath ascend loud preaching and passionate prayer,
Such violent wrestling with sin, that the dogs on the pavement deserted
Wake with a growl from their dreams at the sound of the querulous voice,
And the gay youths, released from the counter and bound for the seaside or hillside,
Start as they wake on their way echoes of undevout feet,
And here and there a rude square, with statues of popular heroes,
A long quay with scarcely a ship, and a hoary bridge spanning the stream,
The stream which struggles in June by the shallows where children are swimming,
The furious flood which at Yule roars seaward, resistless along,
Though the white steam ribbons float by it, forlorn it seems, almost forsaken.
All the day long in the week the dumb streets are hushed in repose,
But on market or fair days there comes a throng of Welsh-speaking peasants
From many a lonely farm in the folds of the rain-beaten hills,
And the long streets are filled with the high-pitched speech of the chaffering Cymry,
With a steeple-crowned hat, here and there, and the red cloaks which daunted the French.
Scarce in Keltic Brittany's self, or in homely Teutonic Silesia,
So foreign a crowd may you see as in this far corner of Wales.

Above the grey old town, at the mouth of the exquisite valley,
Rises a quaint village church deep in o'ershadowing yews;
On a round-topped hill it stands, looking down on the silvery river
And the smooth meadows enced by tall elms, and the black kine, like flies on the green.
Below, 'midst its smooth-pleached lawns, stands the many-roofed Anglican palace,
And aloft from its straight-ridged pines, the enchanter's summit ascends.
Thence along the upward vale, by fold upon fold of the river,
By park and by tower, at last the far-off mountain chains soar,
Flecked with shadow and sunshine which float on the side of the desolate moorland,
And the whole still landscape lies bathed in a haze of ineffable peace.

There, where the mountains ascend by the white little town of Llandovery,
Steeply the circular side of the crater-like summit dips down.
A blue lake lies beneath, deep set in the desolate hollow,
Where scarcely a breath of air ruffles in summer its face.
The Van Lake 'tis called of old time, like the Van Lake of distant Armenia.
Hardly a wayfarer's foot comes near, or a wayfarer's eye.
But far, far below are seen the white homesteads, dotting the valley,
And to-day, as of old, still silence and solitude everywhere reign.

There, as in crowded towns, life is real and full of striving ;
There, too, is life fulfilled of small hopes and of trivial fears.
There, too, the finger of fate, unavoidable, pitiless, awful,
Points with unfaltering aim, to the road which our footsteps shall tread.
Love is among them, and hate, low desires and high aspirations,
Fortune is blind there as here, the good mourn, and the wicked rejoice.
Only there the sense of the Past, the romantic, the mystical lingers,
Touched with a glamour and charm, denied to the turmoil of towns.
The light which never has been, still shines on those hillsides secluded,
Illuming with rays, not of earth, those homely and labouring lives.
Here is a tale which is cherished to-day through that far-withdrawn valley,
Half believed by the aged folk still, but year by year fading away.

Long, long ago, when our Princes were falling in fight with the Norman,
And all our wild Wales lay o'erwhelmed by a torrent of rapine and blood,
A brave peasant woman strove here with hard fate, though her husband had fallen,
Strove for her only boy, who was rising to manhood apace.
So close was the bond which bound widowed mother and dutiful stripling,
None of Myddfai's daughters touched the young man's self-contained heart.
A kindly fortune smiled on the toil of the desolate woman,
Their flocks and their herds increased on the meads of the bountiful vale,
So quickly their numbers grew, that from the shorn valley he drove them
To fresh fields and pastures new on the side of the mystical hills.

Morning and evening he watched on the lonely side of the hollow,
While the grey kine wandered at will on the hill's half-precipitous steep.
Oft on the lake's still surface, no breath came to ruffle the mirror,
Nor sound, save the boulders rolled downward, that stirred for a moment its calm.
All the day long he mused, wrapt in thought on the desolate hillside,
All day the sure-footed kine cropt the sweet grass of the hills.
Thoughts came to him, innocent thoughts of a chaste youth guileless of error,
Thoughts of a maiden as fair as a young man's passionate dream.

Fair were the maidens of Myddfai, but fairer his far-off ideal,
Which touched with a glamour of gold the day-dreams of innocent youth.
All the day long he dreamt on, gazing down on the blue of the waters,
Till the plash of the trout, as they rose, seemed the oar of some mystical bark ;
All the day long he mused, and with evening, by moonlight or starlight,
Dreaming he wound his slow way with his kine to the valley below,
Dreaming through fair summer days and the long dark evenings of winter
The sweet shy dreams of a youth fulfilled of a virginal shame.

In secret his mother noted the dreams which her son was dreaming,
Marking the far-off look in the absent eyes of the boy.
Fain would she rouse him with jests and bantering words, but the stripling
Smiled a soft smile in reply, then turned to his musings again.

When he had spent many days in happy and undisturbed dreaming,
One day, as the setting sun threw beams of bright gold on the lake,
Lo! a great marvel and wonder, a herd of phantom-like oxen
Seemed to his dazzled eyes to emerge from the mystical depths.
White they were, brindled and white, heavy dewlapped, lords of the meadows,
Driven as it seemed by a swan from the lake's far centre along.
Nearer and nearer they drew, till the swan to his yearning vision
Grew to a maiden as fair as the fanciful Fair of his dreams.
Gold were her locks and blue her eyes as the clear sky of autumn,
White was her bosom and red the half-opened rose of her mouth.
Nearer and nearer she came, till the youth, with ineffable longing,
Stretched forth his passionate arms to fold to his bosom the Fair,
Stretched forth, and offered her bread in humble token of friendship;
But the Fair smiled a sweet smile, smiled and eluded his grasp.
Then, as he stood on the brink, in mute and motionless yearning,
Lo! with a silvery laugh, the fair vision faded away.

Oftentimes thus on the brink he stood afterwards waiting the maiden,
Often she came not at all, or a strong wind ruffled the deep.
Twice again did she come, and he held forth bread for her taking,
Still, with a silvery laugh, refusing, she faded away.

Careworn the young man grew, and spent with unsatisfied yearnings,
Nor recked though the kine unheeded strayed on the perilous steeps.
Never again the lake maiden came by sunlight or moonlight,
Till his fond hope too long deferred, wasted him body and soul.
All his sleepless nights were filled with the pitiless vision;
All the musing days, a slow fire burned in his breast;
Half ashamed, he told his mother his pain, and the pitying woman
Sighed that her son should thus pine, but knew not to succour his grief.
Marking his cheeks' red flush, she feared lest her son might be taken,
Till she found no heart for her toil, and her substance wasted away.

There, when Midsummer Eve was come, the magical season,
The young man wandered in vain on the brink of the mystical lake;
There, when All-Hallow-tide came, he wandered, if only the maiden
Might rise on his longing eyes; but never at all did she come.
At last, on the year's last night, he, stealthily rising at midnight,

To the cold lake side went, hopeless, with faltering feet.
The full moon bathed in silver steep hillside and slumbering waters.
By the cold lake side he paused, with something of half-renewed hope,
When, borne on the face of the waters, behold by the reeds of the lake side
Floating a magical disc of milk-white mystical bread.
Swift, yet with reverence too, as one taking the Host at the altar,
Kneeling, the youth partook of the strange ineffable food,
Till ere the weird rite was ended, again a marvellous portent
Greeted his longing eyes, and stayed the quick throb of his heart,
For lo! on the silvery path of the moon on the undisturbed waters,
The herd that he saw once before came slowly gliding to land,
And beyond them—oh, vision of bliss!—the maid of his dreams, approaching,
Plying a light golden oar, in a swift-moving shallop of gold.
Nearer she came and more near, while his heart stood still with emotion,
Fearing the glorious dream should once again vanish away;
Nearer and nearer she came, and leaped from the skiff to the lake side,
And lay, in unearthly beauty, willingly clasped in his arms.

When he found tongue to speak, "Oh, my love, at last have I found thee!
Though not of earth is thy race, oh, stoop to my virginal love.
Oh, it is long I have loved thee, and though I know thee immortal,
Tarry awhile, fair vision, leave me not loveless again!
Come from thy mountain heights, come from thy dwelling deep down in the waters.
Pity me ere I die who can only live in thy love."
Then the maid, "Rhiwallon, I love thee; long time have I tried thy devotion,
Long have I pitied thy vigils spent in these desolate hills;
Always have I been near thee, unseen have I witnessed thy yearnings,
Only the mystical bread was wanting to join us in one.
Now we are one heart and soul, I will live with thee always, and love thee."
And together the mystical bread they ate, and their lives were made one.

Then said the maiden, "Oh, mortal! this warning I needs must give thee.
Thy wife will I be all thy days—thy dear wife, faithful and true,
Nourish thy children, obey thee in all things, be dutiful always,
Fill all thy fields with the dowry thou seest of full-uddered kine,
Love thee and cherish thee always, and plenish thy barn with good harvests,
Long as the will of high Heaven gives thee to live upon earth.
Only, this ordinance holds if a maid of the race of immortals
Wed with a mortal on earth, leaving her higher estate,
If he should strike her three times, she and hers, her bonds being loosened,
Whether she will it or not, return to her kindred again."
Careless the fond youth heard, and smothered her warning with kisses,
And down through the joyous New Year he went with his bride to their home,

Long in great welfare they lived, knit together in happy wedlock;
Never a cloud arose on the tranquil sky of their home,
The great herds throve and increased more than all the herds of the valley,
The robbers who harried the vale left them untouched and in peace.
Never was husband more fond of the wife of his boyish affection,
Never was wife more sweet, or fuller of dutiful love.
The good mother died full of years, and calling her daughter blessèd.
Children were born of their love, more than others prudent and fair.
Their strong sons were good and discreet, laborious, eager for knowledge,
Scarcely the Abbot himself equalled their learning, 'twas said;
Fair were the daughters and good, sweet, dutiful maidens, and prudent;
Nowhere in all our wild Wales was a race so gracious and fair.

And yet, when their wedlock was new, that had happened which now was forgotten.
The youth and his bride were bidden one day to a christening feast.
The young husband hastened to go; but the wife, with half-hid reluctance,
Loitered till almost too late to traverse the difficult hills.
Many a pretext she urged, not loving the rites of religion,
Holding some primitive faith, old as the hills and the seas,
Till, when the hour was grown late, Rhiwallon in playful impatience,
Seeking his wife up and down, found her reluctant at last.
"Come," said he, "wife, it is time," and smilingly on her fair shoulder
Tapped with his empty glove, and she rose and obeyed with a sigh.
"Dearest, remember," she said, "my warning when first we were wedded;
Once that has been which should not. Remember, be careful, my heart!"
Then to the christening she went, nor shrank from the priest nor the water,
Only a vague disquietude long time troubled their souls.

Also long years after this, when the past was wellnigh forgotten,
They were bidden together again to a gay marriage feast in the vale;
Not now was the wife unwilling, but ready to go and eager.
In deep contentment the pair went forth to the innocent feast.
Duly the marriage sped, the priest said his mystical office,
No word the goodwife spake, as she knelt in her place by her lord;
But when the marriage was done, and they sate at the jovial bride-feast,
Sudden the goodman perceived his wife in a passion of tears;
Sobbing, she sate by his side inconsolable loudly lamenting,
Till all the gay company rose with dismay from the midst of their mirth.
Always her prescient soul saw the future hidden from mortals,
The grief that should come of that day, the dreadful problems of life,
The lives that from that day's mirth should arise—to what fate predestined?
The long generations of men foredoomed to sorrow alone.

Knowing the fever of life and its ending, the mystical woman
Held not her peace, but burst forth in a passion of weeping and pain;
But Rhiwallon, knowing not all, but filled with distress for the bridefolk,
Turned to her, and bidding her cease, touched lightly her arm in reproof.
In one moment she ceased from her wailing, and scarcely regarding her goodman,
"Love," she said, "that was the second time; only one other remains."

All these things had they almost forgot, living happy in wedlock,
Watching their children grow to strong manhood and womanhood fair;
Smoothly their lives flowed along in unbroken weal and affection,
As their devious Towy, which wound through cornland and mead to the sea.
Not a thought had the goodman of death, or of parting, than death more bitter;
But the goodwife, loving her lord, watched with solicitous thought.
Scarce from her prescient mind had faded the danger which pressed them,
The bliss which a careless touch might turn in a moment to pain;
Here on the kindly earth she had made her choice and her dwelling,
Here she would willingly live with her husband, and with him would die.
Far off her birthland appeared, cold and lifeless the mystical waters;
Better to sleep in the meads than to pass that cold portal again.
Love's light beaming warm on her life, in her veins the warm human life-blood
Filled with new longings a heart which was only half human before.
"What would life profit her now to those ice-cold abysses returning?
Better to die upon earth by the fate which awaiteth us all."
Thus the goodwife, half human in heart, mused in silence, her children around her,
Filled with a deep boding sense of the terrible nearness of fate.

Last it befell once again that the pair were bidden together
(Christening for youth, for full age bride-feasts, for old age the grave),
To a solemn burial they went; 'twas a friend of their youth who was taken.
All the desolate house was hushed in mourning and tears,
But before the dead was borne forth, the strange heart of the mystical woman,
Long keeping silence with pain, broke out at last into mirth.
Was it because she knew that the burden of living is heavy,
From what load of misery here the dead are delivered by death?
Or was it because she knew of her old primæval religion
How much higher than human life is the lot of the just who are dead?
Or was it her soul had beheld the restitution of all things,
And felt a great hope and joy which lightened the shadow of death?
Who shall tell? but her elfin nature broke forth in immoderate laughter,
Piercing the mourners' hearts, as they stood round the bier of the dead.
Long time the goodman was mute, till at last keen shame overcame him,
No more could he suffer unmoved that meaningless laughter and joy.

"Hush, hush! wife," he said, "you forget," and touched her again on the shoulder.
"For the ending of troubles I laughed," she replied, and grew grave and was still.

Then with a sob and a sigh the goodwife, looking behind her,
Rose from her place by her lord and swiftly passed forth by the door.
"Farewell," she said, "oh my love; thou hast struck me the third and the last time.
Fate 'tis that parteth us—Fate! Farewell! I shall see thee no more."
So strange she showed and so weird that the goodman dared not detain her.
Seeing his goodwife no more, and knowing the finger of Fate;
Seeing his goodwife no more, no longer the well-beloved features,
The hair that was silvered by time, the dim eyes with their motherly care;
But the radiant figure once more, golden-haired, azure-eyed, and immortal,
That at midnight arose, long ago, from the depths of the mystical lake.
None offered to stay her course, but she glided alone, unattended,
Splendid in radiant youth, up the lonely, precipitous hills.
Not to her home or her children returned, nor tarried a moment;
Straight to the hillside she went, weeping and blinded with tears,
And as she passed by the fields where her magical cattle were grazing,
Always she carolled aloud a strange and mystical song.
"Come hither, Brindle!" she sang; "come, White Spot! bring your calves with you!
Come thou, White Lord of the Herd, who wert born in the House of the King!
Come, we must go to our home! and ye, yoked patient-eyed oxen,
Come with me, come with the rest; it is time, come all of ye home!"

The great herds heard the call, and streamed in an endless procession;
The gray oxen burst from the furrow, leaving the ploughshare behind.
Up the rough hillside they climbed behind her, obeying her mandate,
Till they showed to the gazers below like a white cloud mounting the steep.
Up the steep hillside they sped to the lake, and the wondering peasants
Heard a clear voice from the hill, "Deuwch adre! Deuwch adre! Come home!"

Never again upon earth had Rhiwallon sight of his helpmeet,
Never again did he seek his love on the lake and the hills;
Wayworn and weary he grew, nor might dreams of beauty allure him.
The face that he loved and lost was aged, with silvery hair;
But the beautiful being who went from her seat at the fateful banquet—
What was her youth to his age, or his age to her radiant youth?
What if his eyes once again should perceive the bright vision of old time,
Old as he was, and changed from the hopeful dreams of the boy?
Nay, it would kill him to see the black deep which had taken his life's love.
Never again did he gaze on its hateful magical face.

But the strong sons, when they knew their mother was gone from among them—
Gone without even a word, to strange death or to mystical life—
Evening by evening would climb the lonely, precipitous hillside,
Yearning if haply their eyes might see the loved features again.
Long, long vigils they spent in vain, nor ever the vision
Came, any more than it comes to all children orphaned on earth,
Till one night, when all hope was dead, they burst into passionate weeping.
"Mother, thy children," they said, "call thee, and call thee in vain.
Break through the fetters of Fate, take again thy womanly nature;
Come to us, mother, once more, let us see thee and hear thee again."
And lo! as they looked, in the moonlight a shining, beautiful figure
Came in a shallop of gold, on the silvery path of the moon.
Nearer and nearer it came; but lo! as they gazed in fond yearning,
Not as their mother it seemed, but a youthful, fairy-like form.
Gold were her locks and blue her eyes, as the clear sky of autumn.
Bitterly weeping, they turned from the lake side with sinking young hearts—
Turned from the lake side, and went, side by side, down the hill paths in silence,
Silent, with never a word, till they came within sight of their home.
Then close behind them they heard a sweet voice, which called to them softly,
And, turning round quickly, they saw the mother they loved and had lost.

"Listen, dear sons," she said. "With what spells you have drawn me ye know not.
No power but motherly love can bring an immortal to earth,
No other love can avail to reknit the bonds that are broken;
Only her child's strong cry calls back a mother again.
Give me your hands and kiss me; for see, I am old as you knew me,
The youth of those cold depths changed for the kindlier ripeness of earth.
Lo, I am now as I was, when an earthly love kept me among you,
Only I view all things with a clearer and perfecter sight.
Yours, dear sons, it must be to succour your suffering brothers.
Bound to a body which age and disease waste quickly away,
Healers your race shall be, knowing many a secret of Nature,
And all the virtues of herbs, which are sent for the comfort of man.
When ye come to these lonely heights, I will meet you and speak with you always,
Teaching the secrets of life, which are hid from the great ones of earth.
Come to me often, dear sons; I shall see you afar, and will meet you,
Walk with you always, discourse with you, teach you to live and be wise.
Say to my girls that they cherish their father and comfort him always;
Bid them remember their mother, who loves as she loved them on earth.
And now, farewell, dear hearts, since to earth your yearnings have brought me.
While you live I will always be with you. Be wise, then, my children, and good."

Often at evening, the youths would climb to the mystical lake side,
Culling the simples that grew on the slopes of the desolate hills—
"Pant y Meddygon," men called it, "The dingle of the Physicians"—
And with them, wherever they went, their mother invisible came,
Teaching them all that 'tis lawful to know of the secrets of Nature
And the powers of healing that seem to be God's own prerogative gift.
Such was the knowledge they took from their loving, mystical mother,
In all our wide Britain was found no leech so skilful as they.
All the sick of the country around flocked to them to be healed by their cunning;
Broad lands in Myddfai and rank the Lord Rhys gave for their skill.
Often, for years and for years, men might see the gentle Physicians
Culling the herbs on the hills, to battle with death and with pain.
From manhood to age they passed, still learning and perfecting knowledge,
Mounting the hillside at last with slower and tottering steps;
And often a shepherd would tell of a clear voice which spoke with them always,
And oft of a shadowy form, guiding their faltering feet.

So they passed, and were laid in the grave, obeying the mandate of Nature,
Wrapt round in the sweet, cold earth by the kindly general law.
Their sons and their sons' sons came, increasing the lore of their fathers;
But no kindly Presence came to walk with them over the hills.
Slowly, through ages of Time, as the fierce glare of knowledge assails it,
Hardly the fair tale can live in the light of our commoner day;
But still through the country side runs the fame of the gentle Physicians.
The grove of Physician Evan is known in Myddfai to-day.
"Llwyn Ifan Feddyg," it runs, and another—"Llwyn Meredydd Feddyg."
Thus, in the old, old tongue, the old, old legend survives.
The skill, which through centuries lightened the burden of suffering mortals,
Lacked not memorials still in the hearts of the aged and sick;
Nay, in fair Brecknock itself, in the church of far-off Llandefallte,
Only a century since, were their praises engraved on their tombs.
Where is the sceptic would doubt the tale of the mystical mother,
If, five centuries after she went, the Meddygon of Myddfai could heal?
Or if living men in their youth, on the first fair Sabbath of August,
Have thronged from the fair town below to the banks of the mystical lake,
Hoping to see its still surface boil sudden, the white herds emerging,
And the golden shallop and oar, and the beautiful Presence of old—
Hoping, but hoping in vain, yet in simple belief unshaken,
For had they not witnessed her cures of the weak, and the halt, and the blind?

But to-day, with its broader light, flouts these beautiful stories romantic.
No more these fair visions unearthly are seen on the lakes and the hills.
From knowledge alone is strength; but 'tis oh for the fair dreams of old time,

The genius which clothed deep truths in fanciful vestures and fair!
Not more in the legends of Hellas, than these fair myths of the Cymry,
Are grave truths and precious set in a beautiful framework of song.
Let them be; they are fair, they are fine, though they wear not their pearl on their foreheads.
Let them be; they are flowers of our Race, and as is the flower is the fruit.
Not in the savage tales of the Norseman the Cymry delighted—
Tales of blood-stained feasts and rude gods, consumed in a furnace of fire—
But this gentle Physician's story of ruth for suffering mortals,
Mild wisdom, o'ermastering Fate, young passion, and motherly love.
Not wholly your tale shall perish, oh kindly Physicians of Myddfai,
Nor the charm of that mystical soul which was born of and lost in the deep;
Not wholly, while speech is mine, though the low rays of knowledge shall flout you,
And in its broad, pitiless glare you dwindle and vanish away.

But still, as I linger and gaze, perusing the exquisite valley,
Upward by castle and peak, downward by river and town,
Whether from wooded Cystanog, or yew-shaded graves of Llangunnor,
Closing the upward gaze, far off lies the mystical steep.
Many fair scenes lie between us—gray Drysllwyn's verdant hillock,
Grongar long precious to verse, Dynevor's castle and wood,
High perched on its precipice-crags the ruins of grim Cerrigcennen,
Or the green vale higher than these, where the fair Towy winds and unwinds.
However the gaze ascends, the dark precipice closes the landscape,
Beneath whose difficult steep lies the haunted abyss of the lake.
Always the story comes back as I gaze, the beautiful legend
Which here for long ages of time the wondering peasants believed.
In yonder churchyard lie those, who ere they were freed from the body,
Grew strong through their poor brief lives by the gift of the Fair of the lake;
And, as the sun moves to the West and defines the deep shades of the hollow,
I am fired by the fair old tale, till almost I take it for true.

III.

THE CURSE OF PANTANNAS.

'Mid fair Glamorgan's hills the close-set vales
Teem with men's works and toil. The great shafts rise,
Belching forth smoke and fire; the labouring beams
Of the great engines slowly lift and pause
And fall with rhythmic beat. The labouring town
Creeps down the winding valley; the poor streets
Are deep in inky dust. There come no sound
But children's clamour or the solid shriek

Of the quick-throbbing steam. The men are sunk
Beneath the earth, or sleeping weary sleep.
Toil, toil, or rest from toil, that is the sum
Of those unnumbered lives. Yet are they filled
With joys and griefs as are the great on earth,
And through the teeming village love and toil
Are everywhere; the poor lives come to birth,
Grow ripe and are deceased, but never more
The face of nature is as 'twas at first.

But on the unfenced hillsides, far above,
The sounds, the dust, the smoke, come not at all.
Still solitude is there, where seldom foot
Of weary toil intrudes; the keen cool air
Blows fresh and still untainted on the hills;
Awhile the dark pines climb aloft, then stay,
Like a tired traveller, and naught remains
But short sweet grass and thyme and nibbling sheep,
And mountain torrents hid in deep ravines,
While the swift gaze ranges from vale to vale
Masked by its veil of smoke. And, when 'tis night,
Immense Auroras, glaring o'er the sky,
Mark where amid the folded hillsides lies
The City of the Martyr. Here, where still
The Cymric lore, the Cymric speech survive,
The half-forgotten fables of old time,
Of gnome and fairy, flourish undisturbed
Amid the noontide glare of common day,
And one there is reaped from this very spot
And breathing of the race, and it is this:—

Long, long ago, the fair-folk on the earth
Were frequent, and their rings upon the meads
Showed green wherever virgin pastures were,
And o'er the leas their elfin music thrilled
Whether of oaten pipe or silvery flute,
While the young moon was rising on the hills,
And the gay elves footed it merrily
Upon the dry smooth turf. So oft they came,
Summer and winter, on his sweet short grass,
That one grave churl who at Pantannas dwelt,
Hating the senseless revel and the race,
In anger to the witch who dwelt hard by
Revealed his case, demanding if she knew
Some potent charm wherewith to free his life
From this insensate mirth of godless souls.

Then she, knowing his wish and all the lore
Of the forbidden books, counselled him thus :—

"Wherever on thy pastures shows a ring
Which tells of elfin revelry by night,
Yoke thy strong oxen, driving straight through them
Thy ploughs, till all lie fallow. Sow them thick
With kindly corn fit for the use of man,
So, when the harvest comes, this tricksy folk,
That hates the newer race of mortal men
And that which gives them food, will come no more,
For chiefly the unsullied meads they love
Where never ploughshare came since the old time
Ere men were first on earth. So shalt thou gain
Great harvests for thy wealth, and shalt disperse
This cursèd people, and shalt reap white wheat
Till all thy barns o'erflow, and thou indeed
Art lord of thy own lands far more than now.
Do thou this thing, and Fortune shall be thine,
And peace and the full mastery of thy own."

So did the churl. He drove his iron ploughs
Through the inviolate meads, and straight the sounds
Of dance and song grew silent. Never more
Came those strange elfin rings upon his fields,
Nor any traveller passing saw a glimpse
Of those quick-tripping feet ; but far away
The fair-folk turned, where yet no cruel share
Was sent to kill the greensward. Spring-tide came :
The fields grew splendid with the wheat's bright green,
When, one day as the sun had kissed the hills,
The grave churl, turning homeward, saw a form
Upon his path which threatened him, and said,
"Daw dial!" "Vengeance comes:" And in the night,
When all was still, there came a noise which shook
The house as though 'twould fall, and the same voice,
"Daw dial!" And when now 'twas harvest-tide
And the great barns stood open for the grain,
One night, no ear nor straw was in the fields,
Only black ashes, and the same strange form
Met him again, pointing a sword at him,
And in the same weird accents, "It begins,"
"Nid yw ond dechreu."
Then the churl, a.
Begged for forgiveness, willing tha[illegible] fields
Should turn to meads again, wh[illegible]ld the sprite

Promised at last that he would pray his king
Forgiveness of the fault, and come again
On the third day, bringing his lord's behest.

Now, when the third day came, the churl went forth
Through his burnt fields, and there again the elf
Waited, and to the other made report,
"The king's word is for aye unchangeable,
And vengeance must be done. Still, since thy fault
Thou dost repent, and hast atoned in part,
Therefore, not in thy time, nor of thy sons,
Shall the curse fall, but, poised on high, await
Thy distant seed." Then he, as one who hears
Reprieve from death, o'erjoyed sent forth his hinds
To turn the corn to pasture. Once again
The dark green rings grew frequent on the grass,
The gay elves danced, the old melodious sounds
Of song and music gladdened all the fields,
And he grew rich and passed in peaceful age,
And his sons followed him, and slept in peace.

But still, when fourscore years or more had fled,
The dread voice came at times, repeating still
The self-same threat, "Daw dial!"
"Vengeance comes!"
Oft heard across the years; but since long use
Obscures the sense, so, when this warning came
And no harm followed it, the wealthy squire
Who held Pantannas then, took little heed
Of half-forgotten memories. His young son
Rhydderch was come to manhood, and would wed
Gwen, daughter of Pencraig, and both their houses
Were fain of it. A noble pair were they,
In fitted years, and rank, and mutual troth.
No cloud came on the sky of their young love,
But all men praised the bridegroom's gallant port
And the bride's sweetness, and they made a feast
At gray Pantannas ere the marriage day,
Whereto the fair girl Gwen and all her kin
Were bidden. It was the wintry joyous time
Of Yule-tide and the birth-time of the Lord,
When all hearts, for the sacred season glad,
Make merry in the fading of the year.

With mirth had sped the feast; all, round the hearth
Were seated, Gwen and Rhydderch side by side.
Careless they winged the hours with tale and song.

The night was still, there came no breath of sound,
Only without the loud unceasing fall
Of the full river plunging down the rocks,
Only within the noise of mirth and song.

Then suddenly they seemed to hear a voice
Above the roaring stream. A silence fell
On all the joyous group. Not as the voice
So often heard it came, but seemed to wail
Some unremembered word. The maiden clung
Close to her lover for a while, and then
The jovial hearth, the jest, the tale, the song,
Chased all their fears, and all was as before.
No sound without but the unceasing noise
Of the full river plunging down the rocks.

Then, swift again, above the sounds of mirth,
Above the river roaring through the rocks,
A clear voice, dreadful, pealed, "The Time is come!"
"Daeth Amser!" thus it wailed. And all the guests
Rose to the door, seeking whence came the voice,
And first the goodman went, his worn cheek pale
With fear, remembering the tales he heard
In boyhood of the voice. Long time they stood
Expecting, but no voice they heard, nor sound,
But the loud river plunging down the rocks.

Till, as they turned them houseward once again,
Above the roaring waters, three times heard,
The same voice pealed, "The Time is come! the Time!"
Then they affrighted and in silence went
Within the house, and then a mighty noise
Crashed round them, and it seemed a mighty hand
Shook all to the foundations. As they sate
In fear, without a word, a shapeless hag
Stood at the casement. Then one, bolder, said,
"Why comest thou, thou loathely thing?" And she,
"Peace, chatterer, I have naught with thee. I come
To tell the doom which waits this cursèd house
And that which weds with it. But since thy tongue
Is thus injurious, never will I lift
The veil that doth conceal it." With the word
She vanished, none knew whither. When she had gone,
And all was still again, the cry, the cry,
Rose loud and ceased not. Then deep affright
Fell upon all, and gloom. The hour grew late,

And from the hapless house the trembling guests
Went on their lonely ways. Rhydderch alone,
Grown careless in the flush of innocent love,
Delayed his love's departure, till they went
Alone at midnight down the haunted vale,
Across the roaring waters. Unafraid
The lovers fared, nor voice nor shape of ill
Assailed them, undismayed, defying all
The unseen powers of Death and Doom and Ill,
Strong in the virgin mail of mutual love.

But when the maid was safe within her home,
And it was time to part, some livelier sense
Of peril took her, and her boding fear
Burst forth in tender words. "Dearest," she said,
"Good-night! Farewell! Some sense of coming ill
Weighs down my heart. If we should meet no more,
Or if some long delay should cheat our love,
I will be faithful always, and will wed
With thee, and none beside. Ay, though the powers
Of ill should part us all our lives and leave me
Widowed of thee!" And he, "Fear not, my life,
The Power of Love protects us. If I come not
At once to claim thee, as indeed I hope,
And if the powers of ill have might to part
Our lives awhile, yet am I true to thee.
It may be some dark ruin waits our house
For some forgotten wrong; yet, what care I?
They cannot touch our lives, these envious powers,
Nor blight our love. What care I for the rest,
My treasure, having thee?"
Then, with a kiss,
They parted unafraid, and the youth passed
The ceaseless voices and the roaring stream
Undaunted, clothed with love, and caring naught
For things of earth or air.
But as he sped
Across the self-same fields, which long years past
The ploughshare broke, hard by some haunted cave
Beneath the hill, a ring of fairy green
Before him showed, around him bursts of mirth
Came of invisible throats, and silvery sounds
Of elfin music sweet; and, rapt in love,
And thinking careless of his dear alone,
He stepped within the circle, and was lost,
While Time should last, to home, and kin, and love.

For nowhere might his sorrowing parents find
Trace of their son. They searched the country round,
Through every grove and brake; they searched the depths

Of the loud plunging stream ; but never at all
They found him. Then, when many weeks had gone,
They sought a hermit in his holy cell,
And told him all, the wailing cry which rang
Through the sad night, the loathely form which came.
They told him all, and he, with grief and tears,
Knowing what judgment must o'ertake the youth,
Though guiltless, bade the mourners hope no more
To see him, whether in life he was or death ;
And they, lamenting him as lost, at last
Lived their old life, and all was as before,
Till, losing not their sorrow, but bent down
By weight of time, they passed, and in the ground
Were laid, but never again beheld their son.

But Gwen, the gentle maiden, when she knew
That which had been, and how her love was gone,
Mourned for him long, and long time would lament
The cruelty of fate, but never at all
Believed that he was dead, for still she held
That he would come again—it might be soon,
It might be after years, but still would come,
As his word promised. So she dried her tears,
Feeding a deathless hope, and every day,
Morning and evening, when the circling sun
Burst from the gates of dawn, or sank in night,
Upon the summit of the scarpèd rock
Would stand, and scan the landscape far and near,
Seeking her love's return, and, when he came not,
Descend in grief. Year after year she came,
Till from love's casements her unfaltering soul
Looked dimly, and the gathering snows of time
Whitened her chestnut locks, yet still she came,
Steadfast, nor failed of hope, while yet she could,
Still looking for her love. Until, at last,
By the old chapel of the Van, they laid
Her mortal body and undying hope.

The years slipped by, the undelaying years,
And one by one they passed, the young and old
Who knew the story ; scarcely one was left
To tell of Rhydderch or his fate ; the world
Rolled round upon its course ; young lives were born,
Grew ripe, and faded ; many a youth and maid
Came careless, rapt in love, and read the stone
Which told of Gwen, nor knew what powers of ill
Blighted her life and hope, for never more

The elfin music sounded on the leas
Since that dread night of Yule. Another race,
With other hopes and fears, was on the earth,
And the old vanished hopes, and fears, and loves,
Were gone, clean gone, like mist upon the hills.

* * * *

Then, one fair summer morning, from the cave
Where, on that sad night four score years ago,
His footsteps strayed, Rhydderch came forth again
In all the pride of youth. His heart beat high
With love and hope, nor felt he any change,
More than he feels, who, a brief month or more,
Leaves his loved home. His longing heart was full;
He listened to the joyous notes of song
Which the gay thrushes sang, as when he went
To meet his love. Slow Nature showed no change,
The old oaks seemed the same, his sweetheart's home
The same, or hardly changed. The bitter Past
Touched him no more, who for the Future looked
And recompense of love. There were the graves
Beneath the yew, where he in happy tryst
Had lingered with his love when moon-rise came,
As soon he should again. "He had been ill,
Entranced, and the good folk who tended him,
He knew not where, made light of the long weeks
Which lay 'tween him and health. When he was there
'Twas Yule-tide, now 'twas May." He raised his eyes
To see if there, where then it used to wait,
A girl's form waited. Something gray was there,
Half-hidden beneath the yew. Was it herself?
He vaulted o'er the wall, and found—a stone
Gray touched by time, and graven on it deep
In words half-hid by lichen, the sweet name
Of her he loved, "Died, aged three-score years,"
And in some strange year, forty years to come.

Then not so much a sense of grief and pain
Took him as fear. He knew not what had been;
He knew not what he was. His throbbing pulse
Grew slower at the chill cold touch of fate,
And great perplexity and new-born doubt,
And some half-consciousness of long-dead years,
As of a dream, enchained him. Soon he thought
The mists would vanish, leaving all things clear,
And then the love, the passion of his youth

Once more would live again. So, eagerly
He left the place of graves, and took his way
Along the well-known paths, to where he saw,
In the old spot—the same, yet not the same—
The roof-tree of Pantannas. Not as yet
Had he seen human face, and a new fear
Came on him, and strange shame, as of one come
From other air than earth's; for now he knew
That either he was dazed and weak of brain,
Or some great change had passed upon his life,
Which nothing but the gaze of human eyes
And the remembered tones of human speech
Might ever again dispel. And so he went
Up the old path, and gained the well-known door,
And in the old room stood again and mused,
Changed—yet the same; but human face or voice
He saw not. All the people were afield,
Nor was there any there to see or hear
Of those he knew of old. Then, when the load
Of silence grew too great, through the still house,
In his high youthful voice, he called for one,
His childish serving boy, who always loved
To follow him, whether with horse or hound,
All day upon the hills, "Ifan, 'tis I,
I have come back, 'Deuwch yma.'"
The high voice
Through the void space resounding clear, at last
Echoed to where, within a sunny nook,
Bent double with the weight of ninety years,
There dozed an agèd man, half deaf, half blind,
And when he heard, his limbs began to shake,
And he to mutter to himself; again
It came, the old man trembled to his feet;
The third time came the cry, and then in haste,
Tottering, the agèd figure, bowed and bent,
Moved quickly to the door, and there beheld
His long-lost master, fair in youthful bloom,
Unchanged, and in his habit as he was
When all the world was young.
The old man's heart
Went out to him, who stood unmoved, untouched,
Not knowing whom he saw. One word alone
He uttered, "Rhydderch."
And with a flash of light
The Past revealed itself. The youth knew all
That had been, reading in another's face
The unnoted flight of Time. His life was done;
He knew it now. All his old longings dead;
Dust was his love, and all his yearnings dust;

Dust was his life, and all his body dust.
No more upon the old earth could he bear
To walk amid the light of garish day,
And when the white-haired man, with tears of joy,
Would fain have kissed his hand, the Life in Death
Shrank from the Death in Life, and fading, left
Naught but a thin dust, lost in empty air.

Thus side by side they move, the Lives of Toil
And Fancy. What is Fancy but the Past
Or Future, bathed in light which never shone,
Or shall, upon the earth, and yet which shows
Nearer than real Life, and clearer far—
A Life wherein the terror of the world,
Its mystery, its awe, its boundless hope,
Are plainer than in ours, wherein the pang
Of hopeless longing and unmerited pain
Which vex our thought, the blind unequal lot
Which takes us, find some vague apology,
And hope some dim fulfilment, and the ways
Of Fate are justified, the righteous rise,
The wicked fall? Die not, oh sacred star
Of Fancy! Show us still the charm, the awe,
The glamour of our lives, bitterer griefs,
Joys keener than our own; loftier heights,
Depths deeper still: keep mystery, which is
The nurse of knowledge, shading from the glare
Of the full noontide sun, our tree of Life!

TO A GAY COMPANY.

A GRASSY little knoll I know,
Before the windows of my home,
Where, when the chill days longer grow,
And the slow Spring has come,

Forth gleams a golden company
Of lowly blossoms through the grass,
Smiling a welcome back to me
As the soft Spring days pass.

Daily they take the cloudless sun;
With innocent faces free from guile,
And a sweet yearning never done,
They look on him and smile.

And while he shines, the livelong day,
From early morn to failing light,
Stands patiently the dense array,
Content and smiling bright.

But if cold rain or wintry hail
Touch them, the careful petals fold,
Safe where no violence may assail
Their shining cups of gold.

Oh, silent, innocent choir! I seem
To hear your fairy voices rise,
Extolling faint, as in a dream,
Your great Lord in the skies;

And read in your wide-opened eyes
Strange thoughts and human histories,
Till from your humble lives seems grown
Life fairer than your own.

Fair celandines, I love to see
Each year your radiant company
Bloom golden on the springing grass,
As the quick seasons pass.

No careless foot shall come to mar
Your peaceful lives, while life is mine;
Still as the Spring-tide comes shall shine
Each multitudinous star,

So like the others, and the dead
Dear blossoms of forgotten Mays,
The joyous Springs which now are fled,
The wondering childish days

When you, a joyous company,
Or yours, were of an age with me;
When marvels filled the earth and sky,
Nor you could fade, nor I.

Still shall I seem to hear your voice
Of joyous praise, though all be still;
The Spring-time, bidding all rejoice,
Through you and me shall thrill.

Whether we be alive on earth,
Or lying hidden in the mould,
The Spring shall come with throes of birth,
And clothe the fields with gold.

And me, whom the same Maker made,
Shall no renewal touch? Shall I
Beyond all hope decay and fade?
Deeper than Spring-tide lie?

Nay, nay! the sun shines overhead,
The Spring-tide calls, the winter's done;
At last, from close depths dark and dread,
I, too, shall greet the Sun.

FROM JUVENAL.

I READ to-day a Poet dead
In old Rome, centuries ago;
Once more returned the days long fled,
The dried-up waters seemed to flow.

Once more the keen tongue known in youth
Lashed the gross vices of the time,
Portraying with a dreadful truth
The sloughs of sense, the deeps of crime.

Great city of the World! were these
All that the race has gained of thee—
Foul lusts and soulless luxuries,
Fraud, bloodshed, depths of villany?

Was this what we have left of Rome,
This blood-stained sink of dark offence?
Nay, still across the ages come
The high pure tones of innocence:

"Let nothing ever, base to see or hear,
Pass the chaste threshold where a young soul is;
The innocence of boyhood, oh, revere,
Lest what of vileness you conceive be his.

"Despise not thou his pure and tender youth,
But let his weakness stand 'twixt thee and wrong."

Not wholly wert thou dumb, dread voice of Truth!
Nor lost, oh sacred ministry of Song!

IGHTHAM MOTE.

THE gray house from the moat around
Rises four-square; two white swans glide;
A falling stream's uncertain sound
Is heard on every side.

A home in an untroubled land,
As 'twas at first it is to-day;
Unchanged the hushed quadrangles stand,
Through centuries past away.

The drawbridge and the entrance tower
Are still as in those good old days,
Ere freedom baffled lawless power,
Which dullards love to praise.

So old, so gray, so ripe with time—
Ere the broad cedars on the grass
Came from some new-discovered clime
It saw the centuries pass.

So old and yet so new; to-day
Flowers of Japan, in gold and white,
Its builders dreamt not of, make bright
Its gradual decay.

And rounding into leafy bowers
The laurustinus' bulk is spread;
A tall tree bending overhead
Its delicate wealth of flowers.

And over every moss-grown stone
A glamour of the dead is cast—
The charm of days deceased and done,
The phantoms of the Past.

A home, a hundred homes in one,
Before our English race grew great,
Before the doughty deeds were done
Which fixed her glorious fate;

Before the dauntless Buccaneer
From Devon dared the Western seas,
And drove the sullen Don in fear,
And robbed his argosies;

Before the White Rose and the Red,
Ere Creçy proved our England's might,
When scarce the Paynim learnt to dread
The steel-clad Northern knight.

A hundred tales of good and ill,
Of love and right, of hate and wrong,
The joyance and the dole which fill
The treasure-house of song.

The old knights with their mail were here,
The dames demure with high-built hair,
The grave ruffed sage, the cavalier
Flaunting his lovelocks fair,

The periwigged and powdered Beau,
The Dame with hoops and patches brave;
The generations come and go—
The cradle and the grave.

Our grandsires and our granddames came;
They came awhile, their times are dead,
And we, the modern sir and dame,
Are reigning in their stead.

Unchanged the old grange stands, and will
When we in turn are past and gone;

The hurrying years flit by us still,
Life glides unnoticed on.

And what the end? No Goth or Hun
Can blot the record of thy past;
Shalt thou, unchanged, untroubled, last
Till history be done?

The peasants spared thee, the long shock
Of warring Roses came not near;
The Roundhead and the Cavalier,
The King's head on the block,
Thou hast survived. Shall peace o'erturn
What banded foemen deigned to spare,
In some deep hate, when all things fair
In one red ruin burn?

Or shall a wider faith and trust
Bind all, until men recognize
No good but mutual sacrifice,
Nor aim but to be just?

Thou liest within the net of Fate,
Oh ancient England of our love!
Howe'er the circling world may move,
Thou art, thou hast been great!

THE SECRET OF THINGS.

DID the Race of men descend from a Nature sublime,
From a type which is higher than man and almost divine,
Sinking from higher to lower through æons of time,
Through a hopeless decay and slow unmeasured decline?

Whence came, then, this downward force to degrade what God gave?
Can we rest in the thought that we fell from a higher estate?
Shall the work of His hand grow weaker in time and fade,
And that which was once above death, sink down to the grave?

And if we are born with the seeds of a deep decay,
Can it ever be stayed, though it were by an Infinite Will;
Or are all things fated to fade and diminish away
Through all stages of lower life till Creation lies still?

Or if power there be to stay, and willing for good,
Where then shall be set the limit of gradual shame?
Not there, maybe, where we think, nor then when we would,
And how shall our being reascend to the height whence we came?

Or shall this faith rather be ours, that the Infinite Plan
Is worked by a gradual miracle bettering the Race,
Since the quickening Spirit breathed on the sea's dead face,
And the faint life stirred, which one day should blossom in Man?

It were liker, indeed, to the work of an Infinite Might
To raise all the gradual Past from lower to higher;
Nay, but where, were it thus, were there room for the heaven-sent light
That, 'midst growing darkness shining, could bid us aspire?

And what were our profit to rise from the general shame,
If we knew that the Race were doomed to a deeper decay,
Or if millions of lives that are past should wither in flame,
Nor rise from the darkness of Hell to a Heavenly day?

And does not all Nature teem, not only with types that ascend,
But with those their ineffable fates from a higher ideal degrade,
High archetypes dwindling down, which from higher to lower tend,
Keen organs, and powers of might, which to feeble energies fade?

Great Universe, what is thy Secret, what are thy Laws?
Do they dwindle through secular time by the power of an Infinite Will?
Or do all things to Perfectness tend by a changeless ordinance still,
Impelled by the upward force of an inborn Beneficent Cause?

But if such were the law of things, how then should any ignore
The self-same embryo growth of man and the lowest ape,
Which an inborn necessity moulds to such difference of being and shape,
That one rises to godlike discourse, one lies soulless for evermore?

Or shall we believe, indeed, that deep down in the covering earth
May be found, some day, a trace of a Being that once has been,
Which in long-dead æons of time was parent of either birth,
And, in Nature's gradual scheme, stood centred and fixed between?

Can the Individual rise, though the Race sinks down in disgrace,
And, while all is ruined beside, increase to a heavenly height?
Can the Individual sink to some dark, ineffable place,
While the Race rises higher and higher in face of the Infinite Light?

Is the soul of Humanity one with the Individual soul?
Shall each rise with the other or sink, as the suns are illumined or fade?
Shall the hand of the Maker show weak as the æons unchangeably roll,
Grown helpless to stay the wreck of the Cosmos itself hath made?

Nay, from out of the House of despair shall be heard a jubilant voice,
Beneath the deepest depths and hopeless abysses of Ill,
Which in cosmical accents immense, bids all things living rejoice,
And out of the pit of Hell strive onward and upward still.

OH, EARTH!

Oh, earth! that liest still to-night
Beneath the starlit skies,
How splendid dost thou loom and bright
To planetary eyes!

But if some storm-cloud, vast and dark,
Should hide thee from the day;
If through blind night no faintest spark
Should force its feeble way,

No other would thy face appear,
Than on this cloudless sky,
Though all the world should quake with fear,
Though all our race should die.

Great Universe! too vast thou art,
Too changeless and too far,
Dull grows the brain and chill the heart
Before the nearest star.

Oh, kindly earth! upon thy breast
For ever let me lie,
Wrapt round with thy eternal rest,
But gazing on the sky.

ON A BIRTHDAY.

What shall be written of the man
Who through life's mingled hopes and fears
Touches to-day our little span
Of seventy years;

Who, with force undiminished still,
A Nestor stands among his peers,
Full of youth's fire and dauntless will
At seventy years;

Who knows no creeping chill of age,
But, rich in all which life endears,
Keeps still the patriot's noble rage
Through seventy years,

The form unbent, the flashing eye,
The curious lore, the wit that cheers,
The scorn of wrong which can defy
His seventy years;

To whom no wound which mars the state,
No humblest neighbour's grief or tears,
Appeal in vain for love or hate
These seventy years;

For whom home's happy radiance yet
A steadfast beacon-fire appears,
Bright through the storms, the stress, the fret
Of seventy years;—

What else but this? "Brave heart, be strong,
Be of good hope; life holds no fears,
Nor death, for him who strives with wrong
For seventy years.

Live, labour, spread that sacred light
Of knowledge which thy soul reveres;
Fight still the old victorious fight
Of seventy years.

Live, labour, ripen to fourscore
While still the listening Senate hears;
Live till new summers blossom o'er
These seventy years.

Or if a brighter briefer lot
Withdraw thee from thy country's tears,
Be sure there is where change is not,
Nor age, nor years."

IN A LABORATORY.

A MOST intelligent dog I took,
Affectionate, full of caressing grace,
With something of human love in his look,
And such a trustful, half-human face.

Had learnt tricks, too—would give you a paw
Where a brother-savant would offer a hand,
Right or left, as you asked him; could understand
Your speech—it might almost fill one with awe,

Seeing how near to mankind, yet how far
These dumb and pitiful creatures are;
How all their faith and belief and love
Is centred in Man as a Lord above.

And looking into his eyes for awhile,
For knowledge is precious and gained through pain,
I bound him down with a pitying smile,
And deftly removed the left lobe of his brain.

And then, with all that I had of skill,
I healed it again, so that presently,
Though lame and sick, in his love for me,
The creature strove to obey my will.

And when I asked him to give me a paw,
He gave the left first, but when for the right
I asked, his maimed brain failing him quite,
Gave the left—and I thought I had touched a Law.

So I persevered, and the brute again,
With a loving, sorrowful look of pain,
Brought the left paw over the helpless right,
And I marked the effort, with deep delight.

And having pushed knowledge so far, again
I divided the opposite lobe of the brain,
And the poor brute, though willing to offer a paw,
Could no longer obey—and I grasped a Law.

Later on, still athirst for knowledge, once more
I carved the weak brain, as I did before,
Till the poor dumb wretch, as he lay on his side,
With a loving look regarding me, died.

Poor brute! may his pain be for knowledge, and I,
If I grasp not the clue, yet I may by-and-by.
Strange how weak Man is, and infirm of will,
For sometimes I see him and shudder still!

THE SUMMONS.

MARCH 28, 1884.

AWAY from love of child and wife,
From the first flush of ripening life,
From books and Art, from all things fair,
From homely joys, from public care,
A low voice summons us away,
And prince and peasant must obey.

Sometimes amid the noonday throng,
Amid the feast, the dance, the song,
Amid the daily wholesome round,
The inevitable accents sound,
And the ear hears the summons come
As his who calls the truant home.

And sometimes in the lonely night
It sounds and brings with it the light.
Alone, with none but strangers nigh,
Comes the cold voice which bids us die;
Sudden, or after months of pain,
And weary vigils spent in vain.

What shall it bring of profit then
To have loomed large in the eyes of men?
Or what of comfort shall endure,
Save soaring thoughts and memories pure?
Nought else of thoughts and things that be
Can solace that great misery.

Oh dreadful summons, full of fear
For weakling mortal souls to hear!
When that last moment shall be ours,
'Mid failing brain and sinking powers,
May one great strength our steps attend,
The constant presence of a Friend.

SILVERN SPEECH.

THERE are whom Fate's obscure decree
Dooms in deep solitude to be;
For whom no word that mortal spake
The sullen silence comes to break;
And e'en the music of the Spheres
Falls only on unheeding ears.
For them, life's loud processions seem
A noiseless and unmeaning dream.
Around their prison, joyous life
Echoes with noise of fruitful strife.
Yet, to their cells no sound may come,
But all the universe is dumb.
Ah! strange that while all things rejoice
Man only should be wanting voice!
Ah! strange that morning-song of bird
By living ears is never heard!
Nor mighty master-music dim,
Nor Heaven-thrilled note of soaring hymn,
Nor rippling laugh of happy child,
Nor the Deep's thunder-voices wild!
Unreached by life's tumultuous sound
Even as the dead, beneath the ground.
And still, though all creation groan,
Unmoved in loneliness alone.
Ah, cruel fate! unequal doom
That sinks the innocent in gloom!
What first the depths of chaos stirred
But the Ineffable Spoken Word?
What else our inmost souls can reach
Like that Divinest Gift of Speech?
Ah, hapless fate that thus deprives
Of half their life unconscious lives!
Ah! could a soft compassion gain
To soothe the victim's lonely pain!

What if with knowledge, love combined,
Can wake the undeveloped mind,
And without speech or sound can teach
The use of sound alike and speech;
To those dumb solitudes profound
Convey some blessed ghost of sound,
And kindle from the dormant sense
Bright sparks of new intelligence;
Assist the undeveloped brain
New loftier summits to attain,
Till knowledge grow the guide of love,
And love turned Heavenward point above;

And the illumined soul confess
The innate love of Righteousness!
Surely a miracle it is
Which works so blest a change as this!

THE OBELISK.

Upon the river side,
Above the turbid stream,
Which rolls on, deep and wide;
Strange as a dream,

The obelisk defies
Its dim unnumbered years,
Facing the murky skies,
Their snows, their tears.

Three thousand years it stood
Upon the sweet, broad Nile,
And watched the gliding flood,
The blue skies smile.

And many a century more,
Where it of old would stand,
It lay half covered o'er
By the hot sand.

Now with signs graven deep,
In this our Northern Isle,
Where the skies often weep
And seldom smile,

Once more again it rears
Its dim, discrowned head,
Though all those countless years
Its life is dead.

Forgotten is the lore
Its mystic symbols keep;
Its builders evermore
Sleep their last sleep.

Amid this Northern air,
Beyond the storm-tost sea,
Where earth nor sky is fair,
Why shouldst thou be?

Standing amidst the strife,
The modern city's roar,
Memorial of a life
Dead evermore,

And of the end of all
That shows to-day so strong,
The greatness that shall fall,
After how long?

The city which to-day
Shows mightier than thy own,
Which yet shall pass away,
Like thine o'erthrown.

And thou? Where shalt thou be
When Time has ruined all,
And Faith and Empery
Together fall?

Shalt thou at last find rest
Beneath the river's flow,
And mark upon its breast
New ages grow?

Or shall some unborn race
Take thee as prize of war,
And set thee up to grace
New cities far?

Or shall our Northern frost,
Our chill and weeping skies,
Sap thee, till thou art lost
To mortal eyes?

The Past it is, the Past
Whose ghost thou comest here;
The years fleet by us fast,
The end draws near.

But while the Present flies
The far-off Past survives;
It lives, it never dies,
In newborn lives.

It lives, it never dies,
And we the outcome are
Of countless centuries
And ages far.

What if our thought might see
The Future ere it rise,
The ages that shall be,
Before our eyes;

And if incorporate,
Graven by some mystic hand,
Our hieroglyph of Fate
By thine might stand?

Nay, nay, our Future shows
Implicitly in thee;
For well the thinker knows
What was, shall be.

And though a ghost thou art,
'Tis well that thou art here
To touch each careless heart
With hope and fear.

A SONG OF EMPIRE.

JUNE 20, 1887.

FIRST Lady of our English race,
In Royal dignity and grace
Higher than all in old ancestral blood,
But higher still in love of good,
And care for ordered Freedom, grown
To a great tree where'er
In either hemisphere,
Its vital seeds are blown;
Where'er with every day begun
Thy English bugles greet the coming sun!

Thy life is England's. All these fifty years
Thou from thy lonely Queenly place
Hast watched the clouds and sunshine on her face;
Hast marked her changing hopes and fears;
Her joys and sorrows have been always thine;
Always thy quick and Royal sympathy
Has gone out swiftly to the humblest home,
Wherever grief and pain and suffering come.

Therefore it is that we
Take thee for head and symbol of our name.
For fifty years of reign thou wert the same,
Therefore to-day we make our jubilee.
Firm set on ancient right, as on thy people's love,
Unchecked thy wheels of empire onward move.
Not as theirs is thy throne!
Who, though their hapless subjects groan,
Sit selfish, caring not at all,
Until the fierce mob surges and they fall,
Or the assassin sets the down-trod free.
Not such thy fate on this thy jubilee,
But love and reverence in the hearts of all.

Oh England! Empire wide and great
As ever from the shaping hand of fate
Did issue on the earth, august, large grown!

What were the Empires of the past to thine,
The old old Empires ruled by kings divine—
Egypt, Assyria, Rome? What rule was like thine own,
Who over all the round world bearest sway?
Not those alone who thy commands obey
Thy subjects are; but in the boundless West
Our grandsires lost, still is thy reign confest.
"The Queen" they call thee, the young People strong,
Who, being Britons, might not suffer wrong,
But are reknit with us in reverence for thee;
Therefore it is we make our jubilee.

See what a glorious throng they come,
Turned to their ancient home,
The children of our England! See
What vigorous company
Thou sendest, Greater England of the Southern Sea!
Thy stately cities, sown with domes and spires,
Chase the illumined night with festal fires
In honour of their Queen, whose happy reign
Began when, 'mid their central roar,
The naked savage trod the pathless plain.
Thousands of miles, North, South, East, West, to-day,
Their countless herds and flocks unnumbered stray.
Theirs are the vast primæval forest depths profound;
Yet everywhere are found
The English laws, the English accents fair,
'Mid burning North or cooler Southern air.
A world within themselves, and with them blent
Island with continent.
The green isles, jewels on the tropic blue,
Where flower and tree and bird are strange and new;
Or that which lies within a temperate air
As summer-England fair;
Or those, our Southern Britain that shall be,
Set in the lonely sea.
Lands of deep fiord and snow-clad soaring hill,
Where-through the ocean-currents ebb and fill,
And craters vast, from which the prisoned force
Of the great earth-fires runs its dreadful course.
And vales of fern and palm, whence rising like a dream
High in mid-heaven, the ghostly ice-fields gleam.

And from her far and wintry North
The great Dominion issues forth,
Fit nurse of stalwart British hearts and strong;
From her black pine woods, deep in snow,
Her billowy prairies boundless as the sea,
Where on the sweet untroubled soil
Yearly the unnoticed, countless wild-flowers blow,
And by men's fruitful and compelling toil

Yearly the deep and bounteous harvests grow;
From the lone plains, o'er which the icy wind
Sweeps from the North, leaving the Pole behind;
In whose brief summer suns, so fierce they shine,
Flourish alike the apple and the vine;
From teeming ancient cities bright and fair,
Whether in summer's heat or frosty wintry air,
Stamped with the nameless charm and grace
Of a more joyous race;
Or on the rounding prairie nestling down
Homestead and frequent new-built town.
Even to those ultimate wilds where comes to be
Another Westminster on the Pacific Sea.

Nor shall thy Western Isles
Be wanting, where the high green breakers fall
Upon the torrid shore, and nature smiles;
And yet sometimes broods over all,
Thick woods and hot lagunes with steaming breath,
A nameless presence with a face of death.
Fair balmy Isles, where never wintry air
Ruffles the scentless tropic blossoms fair,
Upon whose sun-warmed fruitful soil
Our father's dusky freedmen toil.
Lands of bright plumes that flash from tree to tree,
Long creepers trailing thick with brilliant bloom,
And loud upon the forest's silent gloom
The plunging surges of the encircling sea.

And from the ancient land
Scorching beneath the strong unfailing sun,
Round thee thy unnumbered subject millions stand;
From many a storied city fair,
Old ere our England, first begun,
From marble tomb and temple white,
Built ere our far forefathers were,
And still a miracle defying Time;
Palaces gray with age and dark with crime,
Fierce superstitions, only quenched in blood,
And sweet flower-fancies yearning towards the light,
And lustral cleansings in the sacred flood,
Where by dim temple cool, or shaded street,
From hill or parchèd plain the wayworn pilgrims meet.

And from the unhappy Continent
Which breeds the savage and the slave—
From our enormous South, there shall be sent
A scanty band of strong self-governed men.
And from those poisoned swamps, to-day a grave,
But which one day shall smile with plenty, when
The onward foot of Knowledge, slow, sublime,

Has traversed her and set her children free
From ocean to her fabulous inland sea,
And the fierce savage, full of kingly grace,
Is father of a gentler race,
And peaceful commerce heals the wounds of Time,
And the long history of blood and pain
Comes nevermore again.

And nearer to thee still, and dearer yet,
Thy people of these little Northern Isles,
Who never shall their Queen forget,
Nor be forgotten, whether Fortune smiles
Or armèd Europe storm around,
Whom none assail, beyond the waves' deep sound,
Behind their surge-struck ramparts safe and free.
These are thy closest subjects, these
The brain and heart of Empire, as thy Rose
Within its close-ranged petals comes to hold
A perfumed heart of gold,
Wherein the seed of the miraculous flower,
Safe hid, defies Fate's power.
And most of all thy wondrous mother-town
Upon our broad Thames sitting like a crown,
Who, 'mid her healthful labour-laden air,
Grows every day more fair;
Whom not for fairness do her children prize,
But for her gracious homely memories—
A nation, not a city, the loved home
Whereto the longing thoughts of exiled Britons come!

What is it that their voices tell?
What is it that in naming thee they praise?
Not wider empire only; that is well.
But there are worthier triumphs, peaceful days,
Just laws, a people happier than before,
And rolling on untroubled evermore,
With larger stream, and fuller and more free
The tide of ordered liberty.
These things than empire higher are,
Higher and nobler far.

Our old Draconic Law
With children's blood cemented, no more kills
Its tale of innocent victims. Pitying Love
Amid the abjects deigns to-day to move
Whom no man cared for. If the cruel city
Still claims its thousands, by the outcasts stand
Pure men and women in a gentle band,
Linked in a ministry of Love and Pity.
No more the insensate State
Binds down the worker, to exaggerate
The unequal gifts of Fate,
But comes instead, some care for common good,
Some glimmering sense of growing brotherhood.
No more half deafened by the unresting loom,
Soulless as is the brute, the pallid children pine;

Nor hapless slaves, half naked, 'mid the gloom
And grime and squalor of the sunless mine,
The young girl-workers coarsen, but all take
Some modest gleam of knowledge, which may breed
The faith that is above, yet under, every creed,
And of these humble lives, one day shall make
True citizens indeed.

Nor shall thy peoples' voice
Keep silence of the salutary change
Which brought the gift of fullest freedom down
To humble lives, whether by field or town;
The potent gift, and strange,
Which wakes alone the wider civic sense,
Which, more than knowledge, sobers heart and mind,
And rich and poor in closer ties can bind,
And knits a nation firm in harmony!
Let civil broils and fiercer dissidence
Come—we are one. What care have we?
In speech, in action, we are free.
No mob law need we fear, or senseless anarchy,
And for all these rejoice.

What law for us has done,
For all our greater England 'neath the sun,
Let us do now, building on high a State
Of half the World confederate!
Sure, 'twere the noblest victory of mind
Thy scattered realms to bind;
To guide the toiling, hopeless feet
To where is work for all, and life is sweet;
To teach our millions their great heritage,
To call together high world-councils sage,
Strong as the Priest's, in this our island-home;
Then, though the armèd world shall come,
What care, what fear, have we,
Who, being free, are one; and, being one, are free?

If all the wide Earth brings our millions food,
And if our navies whiten every sea,
If we have rest and wider brotherhood,
All these began with thee;
And shall, if Heaven so will, still more increase
With thy remaining years, till blessèd Peace,
Half frighted from us now by grave alarms
Of half a world in arms,
Shall brood, a white-winged Angel, o'er the Earth.
Then may the rule of Wrong be done!
Then may a new and Glorious Sun
Gild the illumined World! and then
Come Righteousness to men!

Three sovereigns of our English line
Have reached thy length of rule, each of his name the third,
But never England's heart was stirred
By those as 'tis by thine.

Our Henry died lonely and girt with foes;
Our greater Edward fell in dotage ere life's close;
And he thy grandsire knew a troublous time,
A dim pathetic figure! full of pain
And care too great for mortal to sustain,
And in his rayless sorrow grown sublime!

Three Queens have swayed
Our England's fortunes—great Elizabeth.
In whose brave times the blast of war
Blew loud and fierce and far.
Her dauntless sailors dared the unbounded West,
And fought the Armada's might, and did prevail,
And wheresoe'er was seen an English sail
Her Empire was confest;
And round her gracious throne immortal flowers of song
Bloomed beautiful, bloomed long,
And left our English tongue as sweet as it was strong.

And when a century and more had passed
In blood and turmoil, came a Queen at last.
Her soldiers and her sailors once again
Conquered on tented field and on the main,
And once more rose the choir of song;
Not as the Elizabethan, deep and strong,
But, tripping lightly on its jewelled feet,
Issued politely sweet,
And Shakespeare's tongue and Milton's learned to dance
The minuet of France.

And now again once more
A Queen reigns o'er us as before;
Again by land and sea
We cast the chequered sum of victory.
Once more our English tongue
Wakes to unnumbered bursts of song.
A great choir lifts again its accents fair,
And to those greater singers, if we find
To-day no answering mind,
'Tis that too large the Present fills the view,
Yet has its great names too.
Part of the glorious fellowship are we,
The great Victorian company,
Which, since old Caëdmon's deep voice carolled strong,
Through England's chequered story bore along
The high pure fire of the world's sweetest song.

But not in the increase
Of Empire, or the victories of peace,
Chiefly we seek thy praise.
But that thy long and gracious days,
Lived in the solitude that hems a throne,
Since thy great sorrow came and left thee lone,
Were ever white, and free from thought of blame.
Not once in thy long years shadow of envy came
On thee, or him, whose stainless manhood bore
Thy love's unfading flower. Never before
In all our England was a royal home
Whereto the loving thoughts of humble hearts might come.

Thy children's children stand around thy knees,
Their children come in turn as fair as these;
Thy people and thy children turn to thee,
Knit all in one by bonds of sympathy
With thee, our Queen, are we;
Therefore we make our solemn jubilee!

Flash, festal fires, high on the joyous air!
Clash, joy-bells! joy-guns, roar! and, jubilant trumpets, blare!
Let the great noise of our rejoicing rise!
Gleam, long-illumined cities, to the skies
Round all the earth, in every clime,
So far your distance half confuses time!
As in the old Judæan history,
Fling wide the doors and set the prisoners free!
Wherever England is o'er all the world,
Fly, banner of Royal England, stream unfurled!
The proudest Empire that has been, to-day
Rejoices and makes solemn jubilee.
For England! England! we our voices raise!
Our England! England! England! in our Queen we praise!
We love not war, but only peace,
Yet never shall our England's power decrease!
Whoever guides our helm of State,
Let all men know it, England shall be great!
We hold a vaster Empire than has been!
Nigh half the race of man is subject to our Queen!
Nigh half the wide, wide earth is ours in fee!
And where her rule comes, all are free.
And therefore 'tis, oh Queen, that we,
Knit fast in bonds of temperate liberty,
Rejoice to-day, and make our solemn jubilee!!

TEMPERANCE.

WHOSO can rule his soul
In prudence still;
Who can his heart control,
His thought, his will;

Whom, temperate in all,
Labour and play,
No low desires enthral
Nor lead astray;

Seeking the golden mean,
To Duty vowed,—
Ay, though black depths between
Roar dark and loud;

He shall new pleasures find,
More fruitful far
Than for the undisciplined
And sensual are;

A kingdom absolute,
A wider sway
Than his whom myriads mute
And blind obey.

For in his soul one voice
Alone is heard,
Which bids his being rejoice,
One perfect word,

Stronger than heated youth,
Mightier than wrong—

The Godlike voice of Truth,
A constant song.

Silence all discords loud
Within the breast!
Fly from the troubled crowd
To peace and rest!

And let the enfranchised soul,
From self set free,
Find in Right's dread control
True Liberty!

THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

AN ODE. (JULY 4, 1887.)

WITH soaring voice and solemn music sing!
High to Heaven's gate let pealing trumpets ring!
To-day our hands consolidate
The Empire of a thousand years:
Delusive hopes, distracting fears,
Have passed and left her great.
For Britain, Britain, we our jubilant anthems raise.
Uplift your voices all: worthy is she of praise!

Our Britain, issuing at the call of Fate
From her lone islets in the Northern Sea,
Donned her Imperial robe, assumed her crownèd state,
Took the sole sceptre of the Free;
'Mid clang of arms her crescent glory rose,
By shattered fleet and flaming town:
Victorious at the last o'er all her foes,
Embattled rolls her splendid story down.

Soldier and seaman, side by side,
Her strong sons, greatly dared and bravely died.
Close on their steps her dauntless toilers went
O'er unknown sea and pathless continent,
Till when the centuries of strife were done
They left the greatest Realm beneath the sun.
Praise them and her; your grateful voices raise.
Mother of Freedom! thou art worthy of our praise!

No more we seek our Realm's increase
By War's red rapine, but by white-winged Peace;
To-day we seek to bind in one,
Till all our Britain's work be done—
Through wider knowledge closer grown,
As each fair sister by the rest is known,
And mutual Commerce, mighty to efface
The envious bars of Time and Place,
Deep-pulsing from a common heart
And through a common speech expressed,—
From North to South, from East to West,
Our great World Empire's every part;
A universal Britain, strong
To raise up Right and beat down Wrong.
Let this thing be! who shall our Realm divide?
Ever we stand together, Kinsmen, side by side!

To-day we would make free
Our millions of their glorious heritage.
Here, Labour crowds in hopeless misery,—

There, is unbounded work and ready wage.
The salt breeze, calling, stirs our Northern blood,—
Lead we the toilers to their certain good;
Guide we their feet to where
Is spread for those who dare
A happier Britain 'neath an ampler air.
Uprise, O Palace fair!
With ordered knowledge of each far-off land
For all to understand!
Uprise, O Palace fair, where for the Poor shall be
Wise thought and love to guide o'er the dividing sea.

First Lady of our British race!
'Tis well that with thy peaceful Jubilee
This glorious dream begins to be.
This thy lost Consort would; this would thy Son,
Who has seen all thy Empire face to face
And fain would leave it One.
Oh, may the Hand which rules our Fate
Keep this our Britain great!
We cannot tell, we can but pray
Heaven's blessing on our work to-day.
Uprise, O Palace fair, where every eye may see
This proud embodied Unity!
For Britain and our Queen one voice we raise,—
Laud them, rejoice, peal forth: worthy are they of praise?

DAVID GWYN.

DAVID GWYN was a Welshman bold who pined a slave in the hulks of Spain,
Taken years since in some mad emprise with Francis Drake on the Spanish main.
Long in that cruel country he shared the captive's bitter and hapless lot;
Slowly the dead years passed and left him dreaming still of the days that were not,
Of tiny Radnor, or stately Brecknock, or Cardigan's rain-swept heights may be,
Or green Caermarthen, or rich Glamorgan, or Pembroke sitting on either sea.
Sickening within his squalid prison, while still as the circling seasons came
The fierce sun beat on the brown Sierras, springtide and summer and autumn the same,
Almost hope failed the dauntless sailor, chained in an alien and hateful land,
Lonely and friendless, starved and buffeted, none to pity or understand,
Pining always and ageing yearly as slow Time whitened and bowed his head,
While longing and hate burned high and higher as life sank lower and hope fell dead,
With brutes for his gaolers, and fiends for his fellows, chained to him ceaselessly night and day,
Eleven autumns, eleven winters wasted their wearisome length away.

Then there awoke round his floating prison clang of hammers and bustle of men;
Shipwrights labouring late and early woke old thoughts in his heart again.
"Spain will lay waste your heretic island with fire and sword ere the winter be come,
And you and the rest of your felon crew shall row the galleys which sack your home."
The hot blood flushed to the prisoner's forehead, but never a word in reply said he,
Toiling obediently days and weeks till the great fleet sailed on the summer sea;
Splendid galleons towering skyward with gilded masts and with streamers brave,
Floating proudly to martial music over the blue Lusitanian wave,
Four great galleys leading the van, and in one midst the close-thronged benches sate
David Gwyn, a forgotten oarsman, nursing a burning heart of hate.

So along the windless ocean slow the great Armada sped,
Two unclouded weeks of summer blazed the hot sun overhead.
Hourly from the high deck-pulpits preaching rose and chant and prayer,
And the cloying fumes of incense on the brisk Atlantic air;
Courtiers fine and sea-worn sailors jesting the slow hours away,
Silken sails and blazoned standards flapping idly day by day,
And within his high poop-turret, more than mortal to behold,
The High Admiral Medina lounging idly, clothed with gold:
Not a thought of peril touched them, not a dream of what might come,
Proudly sailing, sure of conquest, with the benison of Rome,
And far down among the oarsmen's benches, fainting, desperate,
David Gwyn, a patriot helpless with a burning heart of hate.

With the roaring Bay of Biscay louder winds and greyer skies,
And the galleons plunge and labour, and the rolling mountains rise;
Blacker loom the drifting storm clouds, fiercer grow the wind and sea,
Far and wide the galleons scatter, driving, drifting helplessly.
Higher mount the thundering surges; tossed to heaven, or fathoms down,
Rear or plunge the cumbrous galleys while the helpless oarsmen drown.
Like a diver the *Diana* slides head first beneath the wave,
Not a soul of all her hundreds may her labouring consorts save.
Now to larboard, now to starboard, shattered, tost from side to side,
Helpless rolls the great Armada, shorn of all its pomp and pride.
Down between those toppling ridges, groaning, straining in his place,
David Gwyn among the oarsmen sits with triumph in his face.

Then amid the roaring seas, when hope was gone and death was near,
And the hearts of all the Spaniards sinking, failing them for fear,

Boldly to the haughty Captain, David Gwyn the oarsman went,
Veiling with a fearless frankness all the depth of his intent.
"Quick, Señor! the ship is sinking; like her consort will she be,
Buried soon with slaves and freemen, fathoms deep beneath the sea.
Give me leave and I will save her; I have fought the winds before,
Fought and conquered storms and foemen many a time on sea and shore."
And the haughty Captain, knowing David Gwyn a seaman bold,
Since upon the Spanish main the foemen sailed and fought of old,
Answered, turning to his prisoner: "Save the ship, and thou shalt gain
Freedom from thy life-long fetters, guerdon from the Lord of Spain."
Then from out the prisoner's eye there flashed a sudden gleam of flame,
And a light of secret triumph o'er his clouded visage came,
Thinking of his Cymric homestead and the fair years that were gone,
And his glory who should save her from the thraldom of the Don.
"I will save your ship," he answered; "trust me wholly, have no fear:
Pack the soldiers under hatches; leave the main deck free and clear."
Doubting much the Don consented; only, lest the slaves should rise,
By each oarsman sat a soldier, watching him with jealous eyes.
Little knew he of the cunning, secret signs, and watchwords born
Of long years of cruel fetters, stripes and hunger, spite and scorn.
Little thought he every prisoner as in misery he sate
Hid a dagger in his waistband, waiting for the call of Fate.

David Gwyn, the valiant seaman, long time battled with the main,
Till the furious storm-wind slackened and the ship was safe again.
Sudden then he gave the signal, raised his arm and bared his head.
Every oarsman rising swiftly stabbed his hapless warder dead,
Seized his arms, and, fired with conquest, mad with vengeance, like a flood
On the crowded 'tween-decks bursting, left the Spaniards in their blood.
David Gwyn was now the Captain, and the great ship all his own;
Well the slaves obeyed their comrade, thus to sudden greatness grown.
Straight for France the stout *Vasana* shaping, sudden on her lee
Don Diego in the *Royal*, foaming through the stricken sea,
Driven by full four hundred oarsmen, nigh the monstrous galley drew.
Then from out her thundering broadside swift the sudden lightning flew;
In among Gwyn's crowded seamen straight the hurtling missiles sped;
Nine strong sailors in a moment lay around their Captain dead.
David Gwyn, the dauntless Captain, turning to his comrades then—
"God has given you freedom; earn it: fear not; quit yourselves like men.
Lay the ship aboard the *Royal:* free your comrades and be free."
The strong oarsmen bent, obedient, rowing swiftly, silently,
Till, as if in middle ocean striking on a hidden rock,
All the stout *Vasana's* timbers, quivering, reeling with the shock,

Straight on board the crowded *Royal* leapt that band of desperate men,
Freed the slaves, and left no Spaniard who might tell the tale again;
And the sister galleys stately with fair winds sped safely on,
Under David Gwyn, their Captain, and cast anchor at Bayonne.
And King Henry gave them largesse, and they parted, every one
Free once more to his own country, and their evil days were done.

David Gwyn to England coming won the favour of the Queen;
Well her Grace esteemed his valour in the perils that had been.
What! had those swift, mighty galleys, which could wind and tide defy,
Winged with speed the slow Armada when our weak fleet hovered by?
Had not then that sullen quarry, ploughing helpless on the plain,
Turned and crushed the nimble hunters, and rewrit the fate of Spain?
Who shall tell? But his were doughty deeds and worthy lasting fame,
Though the country he delivered never yet has known his name.

Did he seek again the home of his youth, did he let the years go peacefully by,
Breathing the sweet clear air of the hills, till his day was done and he came to die?
By tiny Radnor, or stately Brecknock, or Cardigan's rain-swept heights may be,
Or green Caermarthen, or rich Glamorgan, or Pembroke sitting on either sea?
Did he dream sometimes 'mid the nights of storm of those long-dead years in the hulks of Spain,
That stealthy onset, that dread revenge, with the wild winds drowning the cries of pain?
Did the old man shudder to think of the blood, when the knife pierced deep to the Spaniard's heart?
Nay, to each of us all is his Life assigned, his Work, his Fate, his allotted Part

SONG.

FAREWELL! farewell! Adown the ways of night
The red sun sinks, and with him takes the light;
O'er the dull East the gathering shadows grow,
And turn to gray the Western after-glow.

Farewell! farewell! But Day shall come again;
Shall hope then die, and prayers be breathed in vain?
Our faithful hopes outlive the fleeting day;
Stronger than Life and Death and Time are they.

Ah! see the last faint ray has ceased to flame.
Courage! our parted souls are still the same.

Round is the earth, and round the
estranging sea,
And Time's swift wheel which brings
thee back to me.

Come back! Come back climbing the
Eastern sky!
Our souls are deathless though our flesh
shall die.
Winged are our thoughts, and flash forth
swift and far
Beyond the faint light of the furthest star.

Come back! or if we meet in some
strange place,
On some dim planet, I shall know thy
face;
By some weird land, or unimagined sea,
I shall not be afraid, dear, having thee.

THE ALBATROSS.

UPON the lone Australian shore,
A chance-sent traveller's careless eye,
Saw a white bird swoop down and lie
With wide wings that should soar no
more.

A feeble quiver shook the bird,
A film the glazing eye o'erspread;
Once more the pearly plumage stirred,
And then the Albatross was dead.

He spread the giant pinions wide,
When 'neath the snowy down he found
By hands unknown securely bound,
A sea-worn missive safe and sound.

And when the blotted page he read,
This message bore it from the sea—
"Five shipwrecked sailors, mourned as
dead,
A thousand miles from land are we;

"Whoe'er thou art whose hand shall
take
Our poor winged messenger, we pray
That thou wilt spare him for our sake,
And send him scatheless on his way.

"Hardly we hope our words shall find
Response, save by some blessed chance;
Good friend who readest this be kind,
And speed us to our well-loved France."

The traveller stood and musing read,
Some new-born pity filled his breast,
Seeing that poor envoy lie at rest,
The living speaking thro' the dead.

And soon to save those helpless men,
A stout ship, many a weary mile
Sailed forth, and found their lonely isle,
And sped them to their homes again.

But I, as o'er this tale I stay
My wandering fancy, seem to hear,
A voice which comes my heart to cheer,
A silent voice which seems to say,

"Thus is it with the world around,
For tho' the messenger be gone,
Some winged thought with his being
bound,
O'er all the world goes echoing on.

"And though its tones sound faint and
weak,
Lost in the rude world's clamorous strife,
The message of dead lips can speak
To souls in prison, words of life!"

IN A GREAT LADY'S ALBUM.

FLIT softly, Muse, on hesitating wing,
Through this fair pleasaunce, vowed to
Prince and King.

Here, ranged apart, as in some leafy glade,
Monarchs and statesmen court the grateful shade;
Poets and warriors side by side are found,
And the grove echoes with harmonious sound.
Science, with steady gaze and tranquil eye,
And Faith triumphant soaring to the sky,
The immemorial East delights to bring
Its tribute to the clear Castalian spring.
Where'er we stray some nobler foot has trod,
And the awed gazer knows a demi-god.

Dreadst thou with daring pinion to invade
The solitudes for finer natures made?
Nay, halt not! Spread thy wings and raise thy song!
Better the feebly right than basely strong?
Thou, too, art like to these, and with them one
In nature, as the star is with the Sun.
Here whoso greatly daring enters in,
This truth shall learn, "the whole wide world is kin."
From Prince to boor, old East, and larger West,
One Truth, one Right, one Wisdom is confest;
One hate of Wrong, one love of nobler Thought;
One reverence for the universal Ought;
One worship of the one pervading Name,
Through varying voices heard and yet the same!

ON A SILVER WEDDING.

MARCH 10, 1888.

THE rapid tide of gliding years
Flows gently by this Royal home,
Unvexed by clouds of grief and tears
Its tranquil seasons come.

To one, as happy and more great,
Came earlier far, the dread alarm,
The swift immedicable harm,
The icy voice of Fate.

The gracious father of his race
Heard it, too soon, and dared the night;
Death coming found him with the light
Of Sunshine on his face.

He left his widowed Queen to move
Alone in solitary sway,
Alone, through her long after-day,
But for her people's love.

Their saintly daughter, sweet and mild,
Drew poison from her darling's breath;
Their young son trod the paths of death
Far, far from love and child.

Nay, now by the Ausonian sea,
Daughter of England, good and wise!
Thou watchest, with sad anxious eyes,
Thy flower of chivalry!

But this fair English home no shade
Of deeper sorrow comes to blot,
No grief for dear ones who are not,
Nor voids which years have made.

One sickness only, when its head
Lay long weeks, wrestling sore with death,
And pitying England held her breath
Despairing, round his bed.

No regal house of crownèd state,
Nor lonely as the homes of kings
Where the slow hours on leaden wings
Oppress the friendless great.

But lit with dance and song and mirth,
And graceful Art, and thought to raise,
Crushed down by long laborious days,
The toiler from the earth.

Its Lord an English noble, strong
For public cares, for homely joys,
A Prince among the courtly throng,
A brother with his boys.

Who his Sire's footsteps loves to tread,
In prudent schemes for popular good;
And strives to raise the multitude,
Remembering the dead.

And having seen how far and wide
Flies England's flag, by land and sea,
Would bind in willing unity
Her strong sons side by side.

Its gentle mistress, fair and sweet,
A girlish mother, clothed with grace,
With only summer on her face,
Howe'er the swift years fleet.

Who was the Vision of our youth,
Who is the Exemplar of our prime,
Sweet Lady, breathing Love and Truth,
With charms which vanquish Time.

Good sons in flowering manhood free,
Girls fair in budding womanhood,
An English household bright and good,
A thousand such there be!

Great Heaven, how brief our Summers show!
And fleeting as the flying Spring!

The almonds blush, the throstles sing,
The vernal wind-flowers blow.

And yet 'tis five-and-twenty years,
Since those March violets dewy-sweet,
Were strewn before the maiden's feet,
Amidst a people's cheers.

And mile on mile the acclaiming crowd
Surged round her, as the soft Spring air
With joy-bells reeled, and everywhere
Roared welcome deep and loud.

While this, our trivial life to-day,
Loomed a dim perilous landscape strange,
Hid by thick mists of Time and Change,
Unnumbered leagues away.

Long years! long years! and yet how nigh
The dead Past shows, and still how far
The Future's hidden glimpses are
From mortal brain and eye.

What secrets here shall Time unfold?
What fates befall this gracious home?
Shall to-day's festal once more come,
Ripened with time to gold?

Heaven send it! Close-knit hearts are here,
Not that old hate of sire and heir;
Here flourish homely virtues fair,
And love that conquers fear.

For these may Fortune grant again
Their Sovereign's large and blameless life,
Unmarred by care, undimmed by strife,
Less touched than Hers by pain!

High set above the noise and dust
Of Faction, and contented still
To guide aright the popular will,
By sympathy and trust!

Through civic wisdom temperate,
And forethought for the general need,
Keeping midst change of politic creed,
A Throne, a People great!

THE INVINCIBLE ARMADA, 1588.

'Tis a fair eve at midsummer, three hundred years ago,
Drake and his bold sea captains all are out on Plymouth Hoe;
They are busy at bowls, brave gentlemen, with jovial mirth and jest,
When watching eyes spy far away a sail upon the West.

A sail! ten sail! a hundred sail! nay nigh two hundred strong!
And up the sea they swiftly climb in battle order long;
Their high main-royals rake the skies, as in a crescent wide,
Like a thick wood, full seven miles broad, they sail on side by side.

There is swift alarm and hurry then, but never a thought of fear,
As the seamen, with the falling night, behold the Don draw near.
"Ring out the bells," cries Hawkins, and across the darkling main,
England peals out defiance to the gathered hosts of Spain.

They do not fear the Don, not they, who on the Spanish main,
Have fought his might and lowered his pride, again and yet again;
And yet 'tis fearful odds they face, when they sail forth to meet,
Spain and her great Armada with the puny English fleet.

And the streets grow thronged with seamen, and the crowds begin to shout,
And quick oars dash and sails are set, before the stars come out.
They weigh their anchors with a will, and out they speed to sea,
Where up the Channel, stately, slowly, forge the enemy.

Now St. George for merry England, and St. James for Papal Spain,
Our seamen are our chiefest hope, nor shall we trust in vain.
We have quenched the fires of Smithfield, and no more, 'fore God, we swear,
Shall they ever again flame upward, through our sweet, free, English air.

Now when they neared the foeman, as he loomed across the sea,
Lord Howard led the English van, a Catholic Lord was he,
And his great Ark Royal thundered out her broadsides loud and long,
With Drake and Frobisher hard by, and heroes in a throng.

But never a gun the Spaniards fired, but silent ploughed and slow,
As bisons in a sullen herd across the prairies go;
And behind them close, like hunters swift, with hounds that snarl and bite,
The English squadrons followed through the breezy summer night.

They could see the Dons' high lanterns, in a brilliant crescent flare,
They could catch the Black Friars' moaning chant upon the midnight air.
All night they pressed them close, and ere the sun began to flame,
Long miles away, by blue Torbay, the warring galleons came.

Soon as the dawn began to glow, the guns began to roar,
All day the thundering navies fought along the Dorset shore,
Till Portland frowned before them, in the distance dark and grim,
And again the night stole downward, and the ghostly cliffs grew dim.

And already, praised be God, who guides the patriots' noble strife,
Though not an English flag is lost, and scarce an English life,
De Valdez yields his ship and sword, and into Weymouth Bay,
They tow Oquenda's burning bark, the galleon of Biscay.

Day fades in night, 'mid stress of fight, and when to waking eyes,
Freshwater's ghostly sea cliffs, and the storm-worn Needles rise,
From a score of sheltered inlets on the smiling Solent sea,
England comes forth to aid her sons, with all her chivalry.

There sails my Lord of Cumberland, and he of Oxford too,
Brave Raleigh and Northumberland, and Grenville and Carew.
As to a field of honour hasten knights of deathless fame,
To meet the blue blood of Castile, the flower of England came.

Then with the wind, the foe faced round, and hissing o'er the blue,
Forth from his lofty broadsides vast his hurtling missiles flew;
Long time the fight confusedly raged, each man for his own hand;
St. George! protect our country, and the freedom of our land!

See here round brave Ricaldes thick the English levies press!
See there the keels from London town, hemmed round and in distress!
Such thunder sure upon the seas was never heard before,
As the great ordnance smite the skies with one unceasing roar!

Now when the fifth day of the fight was come, St. James's Day,
The sea was like a sheet of glass, the wind had died away,

And from out the smoke clouds looming vast, churning the deep to foam,
Driven by three hundred oars the towering galliasses come.

But ere they neared the English line, a furious iron hail
Of chain-shot and of grape-shot crashed through mast and oar and sail;
No more they could, they turned and fled, upon our English sea,
Not yet such furious hatred raged, or stubborn bravery.

And upon the steep white walls of cliff and by the yellow sand,
With pike and musket hurrying down the sturdy peasants stand,
And the trembling women kneel and call upon the Holy name,
And watch the thick black cloud which bursts in murderous jets of flame.

Now St. George for our old England! for the Don has turned and fled,
With many a strong ship sunk or burnt, and gallant seaman dead,
And by the last day of the week, the warring squadrons lie,
The foeman moored in Calais roads, the English watching by.

They sent for aid to Parma, for they were sore beset,
But the Duke was at St. Mary's shrine, and could not succour yet,
For by Nieuport and by Dunkirk, stern, immovable as Fate,
With stalwart ships, and ordnance strong, the Dutchmen guard the gate.

Now that great Sabbath dawns at last, and from the foeman's fleet,
The deep mass-music rises, and the incense sickly-sweet,
And beneath the flag of England, stern, with dauntless hearts and high,
The seamen take the bread and wine, and rise prepared to die.

Then came Lord Henry Seymour, with a message from Her Grace,
And Sir Francis read the missive with grave triumph on his face,
And he sware an oath, that come what would, her orders should be done
Before the early rose of dawn proclaimed the coming sun.

And the summer daylight faded, and 'twas midnight on the wave,
And among the close-moored galleons, all was silent as the grave,
And the bright poop lanterns rose and fell with the breathing of the deep,
And silent rode the towering hulls, with the weary crews asleep.

When two brave men of Devon, for Sir Francis bade them go,
With all sail set before the wind, stole down upon the foe;
And before the drowsy watchmen woke, the swift destruction came,
As with a blaze of wildfire leapt the fireships into flame!

Then from the close-thronged ships of Spain loud cries of terror rise,
As from their burning ranks the glare flares upward to the skies,
With cables cut, and sails half set, they drift into the night,
And many are crushed, and many burn, and some are sunk outright.

And the watchers on the Dover Cliffs know well what thing has been,
And for noble England cheer aloud, and for her Maiden Queen.
No more, no more, great England, shalt thou bow thy head again
Beneath the Holy Office and the tyranny of Spain!

And the conquering English followed, and upon the Flanders shore,
Hopeless the shattered galleons fought, till fight they could no more.
And some went down with all their crews, and some beat helplessly
Upon the yeasty quicksands of the perilous Northern Sea.

Then Sidonia with the remnant, shattered ships and wounded men,
Fled northward, with the foe in chase, hoping for Spain again;
But by the Orkneys, lo! the Lord blew with a mighty wind,
And on the cruel Irish West they left two score behind.

And the savage kerns of Desmond, when the stormy winds were o'er,
Robbed the thronged corpses of the great, upon the lonely shore.
There, in his gold-laced satins, lay the Prince of Asculè,
'Mid friars, and seamen drowned and dead, and Dons of high degree.

Or faint with hunger and with thirst, though rescued from the wave,
The haughty Spaniards knew in turn the misery of the slave.
They ate the captives' bitter bread, they who brief weeks ago
Sailed forth in high disdain and pride to lay our England low.

And the scattered remnant labouring back to Spain and life again,
Left fourscore gallant ships behind and twice ten thousand men;
And when in dole and misery this great emprise was done,
There was scarce a palace in all Castile which did not mourn a son.

Let not their land forget the men who fought so good a fight!
Still shall our England keep undimmed their fame, their memory bright.
And if again the foemen come in power upon the main,
May she find sons as strong as those who broke the might of Spain!

ODE SUNG AT THE FIRST CO-OPERATIVE FESTIVAL.

AUGUST 17, 1888.

COME let us sing together a new song,
The triumph of the weak made strong;
The victories of peace we celebrate,
Not those of war and hate.
The victories of peace, won after many days:
Let us our voices tune to joy and praise;
Come let us sing a new and happy song!

Time was when by his too-great toil bowed down,
The worker feared his master's frown;
For some scant wage chained to his hopeless task,
Nor ever dared to ask
For his young lives and piteous gains afraid,
A fitting share of that his hands had made;
But now through union strong, the workers claim their own.

There is red war not fought with sword or gun,
Where, in deep peace, war's wrong is done;
Where face to face in hostile camps they stand
Who should clasp hand with hand:
The rich man waning slow in soulless ease,
The poor man spent by toils and miseries.
Sing we a cheerful song, Time's curse is almost done.

Ay, almost done, but ah! not wholly yet;
Let not too sanguine souls forget
Those for whom no man taketh thought or heed,
The hearts, the lives that bleed.
Let not our workers, strong in brotherhood,
Forget the friendless toiler's starving brood.
Mixt be our song with joy, yet not all cheerful yet.

Yet for to-day, at least, let us rejoice,
Uplifting jubilant heart and voice.
Not what has been we hymn, but what shall be;
Not the old misery,
But the new days when Man beneath the power
Of peaceful union blooms a perfect flower—
For this we choose not sorrow, but rejoice.

We come to-day in this our solemn mirth,
Bringing the flowers, the fruits, of earth,
Reared by strong hands which labour glorifies.
Toil, honest toil we prize—
Look round and see how rich the harvest grows,
The mellow fruits, the perfumed rose that glows
Raised by untiring toil from our good mother Earth.

See how to-day the long drawn vistas fill
With fruit of every toiler's skill,
The man's strong gains, the woman's deft and fine;
Here heart and brain combine

In pitying succour for the weak and dumb;
Here are fair schemes, to build the happy home,
And children's work, and play, than work more precious still.

Therefore do we make merry and are glad;
No care to-day shall make us sad.
We sing the song of wider brotherhood,
Knit close for general good.
We sing the higher social sense which binds
Each for the general good, opposing minds.
We hail thee, blessed Union, and are glad!
And sing aloud together a new and cheerful song!

TO JOHN BRIGHT.

MARCH 27, 1889.

FRIEND of the friendless else, and art thou dead?
Great Master of our vigorous Saxon speech,
Unwearied pleader for the people's bread,
Hater of war, strong to convince and teach,
With passionate faith and indignation strong,
Mighty to slay the hydra-heads of wrong.

Thy voice was aye for Freedom, and thy heart
Warlike for Peace, since o'er the open grave
Of thy young love, thou didst accept thy part
To strike the shameful fetters from the slave,
To lift the toiler from his hopeless lot,
To plant the civic sense where it was not.

Thy soul was reared on fitting food; thy tongue,
Touched with our older England's purest fire;
The noblest strains our Island Muse has sung,
Shakspeare and Milton did thy speech inspire;
The poets taught thy rhythmic periods strong;
And thy impetuous flights were winged with song.

Thou couldst not brook the faithless souls that dread
To follow Right and leave the rest to God;
No selfish fear of careless riches bred
Might turn thee from the path by Duty trod.
England thou lovedst, and beyond set of sun
A greater England still, and both made one!

Thy friend and comrade went his way alone;
Long years ago God called him, and he went.
To him thy speech has reared, than sculptured stone,
A statelier and more lasting monument.

Long time were ye reviled, scorned, hated; now
A people's homage crowns each reverend brow.

Champion of Freedom, by thy hearse shall I
Keep silence—I who owe thee much indeed?
A Prince among the People comes to die,
And shall no grateful son of verse take heed?
Nay, on thy grave, ere falls the earth, I lay
This simple wreath to deck thy honoured clay!

ON ROBERT BLAKE.

ENGRAVED ON THE BRASS IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER.

KINGDOM or Commonwealth were less to thee
Than to crown England Queen o'er every sea.
Strong sailor, sleeping sound as sleep the just,
Rest here! our Abbey keeps no worthier dust!

TO LORD TENNYSON:

ON HIS EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY, AUGUST 6, 1889.

MASTER and seer! too swift on noiseless feet
Thy hurrying decades fleet with stealthy pace;
Yet not the less thy voice is clear and sweet,
And still thy genius mingles strength with grace.
On thy broad brow alone and reverend face
Thy fourscore winters show, not on thy mind.
Stay, Time, a little while thy headlong chase!
Or passing, one Immortal leave behind;
For we are weak, and changeful as the wind.

For him long since the dying swan would sing,
The dead soul pine in splendid misery.
He winged the legend of the blameless King,
And crossed to Lotusland the enchanted sea;
Heard the twin voices strive for mastery,
Faithful and faithless; and with prescient thought
Saw Woman rising in the days to be
To heights of knowledge in the past unsought;
These his eye marked, and those his wisdom taught.

And he it was whose musing ear o'erheard
The love-tale sweet in death and madness end;
Who sang the deathless dirge, whose every word
Fashions a golden statue for his friend.
May all good things his waning years attend
Who told of Rizpah mourning for her dead!

Or in verse sweet as pitying ruth could lend
The childish sufferer on her hopeless bed;
Thoughts, pure and high, of precious fancy bred.

His it is still to scan with patient eye
The book of Nature, writ with herb and tree;
The buds of March unfold, the lush flowers die,
When sighs of Autumn wail o'er land and sea,
And those great orbs which wheel from age to age,
Cold, unregarding fires that seem to blight
All yearning hope and chill all noble rage;
And yet were dead, and void, maybe, of light,
Till first they swam upon a mortal's sight.

Master and friend, stay yet, for there is none
Worthy to take thy place to-day, or wear
Thy laurel when thy singing-days are done.
As yet the halls of song are mute and bare,
Nor voice melodious wakes the tuneless air,
Save some weak faltering accents faintly heard.
Stay with us; 'neath thy spell the world grows fair.
Our hearts revive, our inmost souls are stirred,
And all our English race awaits thy latest word!

TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN,

REVISITING WALES.

AUGUST 24, 1889.

WELCOME, dear Lady, welcome once again,
To thine own land—nor for the last time come.
Small is our Gwalia, but a fair domain,
Who comes to her comes home.
Come now and often, still our warm hearts burn,
Though the swift winters close or dim the eyes
That saw thee last; to thee our spirits turn,
Still to our lips true words of welcome rise.
Dear Lady! welcome, welcome home!
Our Cymric eyes grow bright to see our Sovereign come.

Once long ago, didst thou, a careless child,
With smooth young brow on which the Imperial Crown
Weighed not as yet, amidst our hill-sides wild
Abide, and with thine own
Didst spend thy Springtime's joyous hours and bright,
Safe-guarded by a mother's tender care.
Then all the unfolding world showed clear and fair
To thy unwearied mind and eager sight;
Ah! it is blest indeed to be
In life's young morn with all fair things to see!

And then thou camest to thy Wales once more
In happy wedlock, by the knightly arm

Of thy new Arthur, sheltered safe from harm,
By Menai's sounding shore,
Strong in Love's strength, as one who seemed to bear
A potent talisman to shield from ill.
But what defence averts the stroke of care,
Or blunts the shafts of Heaven's mysterious will!
Grief dwelt with thee long time, but now
The crown of Resignation decks thy brow.

Dear Lady, we are feeble folk, and weak,
But our old tongue and loyal hearts we keep;
We cherish still the love we may not speak—.
The old affection deep.
Still is our Wales "a sea of song," and still
From smiling valley, and from soaring hill,
Eryri's snows and fair Clwyd's verdant plain,
Or that strange shrine upon the Western Main,
There comes a universal voice
Of welcome to our Queen, bidding all hearts rejoice.

VENITE PROCIDAMUS.

Our hopes, our fears,
Our love and hate,
Our joys and tears,
Our throws with fate,
What are they all but phantoms fleeting past,
Weak creatures of a day, which but a day may last?

But the great Scheme
Fares on its course
Thro' Time's long dream
Of changing force.
It saw the plesiosaur and mastodon
Wax strong, and dwindle down, and still goes silent on.

It saw the ape
Rule every land,
The cave-man shape
Flints for his hand.
It saw a thousand generations pass
Across life's mournful stage, like visions in a glass.

It saw the strange
Forgotten Kings,
Ages of change,
Terrible things,
It saw the Egyptian and Assyrian come,
The gay Hellenic bloom, the rugged sway of Rome.

These too it saw
Totter and fall,
A purer law
O'er-ruling all,
And then the arrested march, the long delay,
The baffled hope, the Dawn fading to common day.

It makes no cry,
It lifts no voice,
Tho' all things die,
Tho' all rejoice,

It goes unceasing onward, blind and dumb,
Nor halts, nor hastes, nor heeds whatever things may come.

Eternal Scheme,
Great Lord of all,
August, Supreme,
Prostrate we fall,
We cannot know Thy working, nor its end,
Nor by what hidden paths Thy Perfect Will may tend.

But if one word
Might come, or sign,
Our souls were stirred
To growths divine,
No longer should we walk in fear and doubt,
Like children in dark ways, before the stars come out.

Ah no! the word
The soul can hear
Is only heard
By the inner ear,
No outward light it is which can illume
The spiritual eye, and pierce the enshrouding gloom.

An inborn light,
An inner voice,
Which burneth bright,
Which doth rejoice,
A Faith in things unseen, an inward sight
Which thro' a wrecked world sees the victory of Right.

With this our guide,
Our strength, our stay,
No more aside
Our footsteps stray.
Fulfil Thyself, Great Scheme, Eternal Plan,
Work out—we ask no word — the Destiny of Man.

THE END.

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